

CHAPTER TWELVE

HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE EAST

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Procopius, Witness and Historian

The long reign of Justinian was certainly a period of contradictions, at least between 527 and 565, even if we exclude the preceding co-reign of almost a decade, when he possessed *de facto* control of the imperial government.¹ It was a crucial moment in the transition to the Middle Ages, with its contrast between the attraction of the new epoch and the desire to recreate past conditions, in the face of circumstances which in their ethnic and geographical aspects, and within the framework of Christian thought, were by no means easy to reconcile with the circumstances of two centuries previously.²

So it was a moment of travail, and one that could not fail to have its influence on the culture of the time: in varying measure, obviously, in relation to the nature of its manifestations, and to the character of those who interpreted it. Historiography seems in many respects the most suitable of its manifestations: it is essentially contemporary history, and as such is the expression of an interpreter who is also a witness, often an eye-witness, with his immediate reactions, emotions, passions, interests. One thinks immediately of Procopius

¹ I dedicate this chapter to Umberto Albin. On the duration of Justinian's reign according to Procopius, see below, 24ff., regarding the chronology of the *Anecdota*.

² This is a large subject, and one that is almost always dealt with, though in different ways, by those who have considered this period (as for example in two classic works, J.B. Bury, *History of the later Roman Empire from the death of Theodosius I to the death of Justinian II* [London 1923] 417ff.; E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, publié par J.-R. Palanque [Amsterdam 1968] II 709-23); different points of view are found, for example, in G. Downey, "Paganism and Christianity in Procopius", *Church History* 18 (1949), 89-102 and M.V. Levchenko, *Byzance des origines à 1453* (Paris 1945), 152ff. (an expression of the tendencies and concerns of Soviet historiography of the period). Also worthy of note is A. Pertusi, "L'atteggiamento spirituale della più antica storiografia bizantina" *Aevum* 30 (1956), 134-66, and especially A.-A. Cameron, "Christianity and tradition in the historiography of the late empire", *Classical Quarterly* n.s. 14 (1964), 316-28.

of Caesarea, the most notable historian of his time and perhaps of the entire Byzantine period; his chronicle was continued down to the year 558 by Agathias of Myrina, whose temperament was somewhat less lively, and until 578 by Menander the Guardsman, who was a little later but who was in some respects linked to the same outlook.³

Procopius was certainly affected by this period of contradictions, as we have called it, more so than anyone else, at least among the historians. There are a number of reasons for this, which include: his upbringing on the classics of historiography; his own social class (all the evidence points to its being that of the senators and landed proprietors); the many years he spent in the company of Belisarius, characterised as they were by the stormy relations between the general and the emperor, and by the frequently decisive influence of their respective wives on political decisions; and so on.⁴ While it is difficult to discern a consistent line in Justinian's policies (the reconquest of territories long lost to the empire, often at the price of concessions to the barbarians in other territories), it appears no less difficult to discern a consistent attitude in Procopius' writings, especially when we consider his attitude towards Justinian.⁵

Born in Caesarea in Palestine towards the end of the fifth century, and therefore formed by a culture dominated by the celebrated school of rhetoric, Procopius launched himself on his career in Constantinople, probably as a lawyer. There he was noticed by Belisarius: their meeting affected his whole life, for his position as

³ See below for Agathias and Menander the Guardsman. For detailed information and a full bibliography on both of them, as well as on the other historians dealt with in this chapter, see the classic work of Gy. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica, I Die byzantinischen Quellen der Geschichte der Türkvölker* (Berlin 1958² reprinted Leiden 1983); see also J. Karayannopoulos and G. Weiss, *Quellenkunde zur Geschichte von Byzanz (324–1453)* (Wiesbaden 1982).

⁴ On the role played, in general, by the imperial court, see for example G. Ravegnani, *La corte di Giustiniano* (Roma 1989); but see especially R. Browning, *Justinian and Theodora* (London 1971); E.A. Fisher, "Theodora and Antonina in the Historia Arcana: History and/or Fiction?", *Arethusa* 11 (1978), 253–79 (= J. Peradotto and J.P. Sullivan, eds., *Women in the Ancient World. The Arethusa Papers*, Albany, New York 1984, 287–313); H.-G. Beck *Theodora und Prokop. Der Historiker und sein Opfer* (München 1986).

⁵ These are the characteristic features of Procopius' vision of his times; there is an excellent account in B. Rubin, *Procopius von Kaisareia* (Stuttgart 1954), then in *RE* XXXIII, 1, under *Procopios* 21 (1957), 273–599 (especially, for these aspects, 349–54); and in Av. Cameron, *Procopius and the sixth century* (London 1984), especially pp. 225–260.

symbolus and *pàredros* to Justinian's great general allowed him to witness at first hand many of the important events of Justinian's reign. Procopius followed Belisarius on his expeditions to Persia, Africa and Italy, and was close to him between 527 and 540; he had personal experience of the great plague at Constantinople in 542. He died probably after Justinian, that is to say after 565, but in fact little is known of the last twenty or twenty-five years of his life. They were years devoted to the composition of his various writings, years filled perhaps with disillusionment and disappointment, leaving their mark on his works.

The central problem of Procopius, considered by all modern scholars who have dealt with the period, is the relationship between his three works, the *Bella*, the *Anecdota* (henceforth *Anecd.*) and the *De aedificiis* (henceforth *Aed.*): the extent of the problem was mapped out long before Nicolò Alemanni published the first edition of the *Anecd.* in 1623: the *Aed.* had in fact been published a little less than a century earlier, by Beato Renano in 1531.⁶ In the *Bella* Procopius often reveals his complete disagreement with Justinian, especially after the weakening of his links with Belisarius; what we have here may not be invective, but then it is certainly not a panegyric like the *Aed.*, which essentially is no different from other more or less contemporary panegyrics such as those of Paul the Silentiary in the *Ekphrasis*, of Corippus, or of Agathias at the beginning of the *Cycle*.⁷

The contrast becomes unequivocal when we turn our attention to the introduction to the *Aed.* (1, 1, 6–17), where Justinian is praised for having saved the state, subdued the barbarians, defended religion, renewed the laws, etc., and especially for having reinforced the frontiers, reconstructed and founded cities, and ensured better living conditions for his subjects; for this he is deserving of gratitude and of being called τῆς οἰκουμένης (1, 1, 17). Even apart from a systematic

⁶ For the history of the transmission of Procopius' works *Anecd.* and *Aed.*, see the *Prolegomena* to J. Haury's edition, III, 1 (1906) and III, 2 (1913), republished with *addenda* and *corrigenda* by G. Wirth, I–IV (Leipzig 1962–64).

⁷ Cf., for example, A.-A. Cameron, "The Cycle of Agathias", *JHS* 86 (1966), 6–25; B. Baldwin, "The date of the *Cycle* of Agathias", *Byzant. Zeitschrift* 73 (1980), 334–40; good information on these authors is to be found in H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (München 1978), II 166–7 and *passim*; on Corippus, see the introduction by S. Antès to his edition (CUF, Paris 1981) of the *In laudem Iustini*; cf. especially Av. Cameron, *Procopius*, 243–60 (& lit.); on Paul the Silentiary see Mary Whitby, "The occasion of Paul the Silentiary's *Ekphrasis* of S. Sophia", *Classical Quarterly* 35 (1985), 215–28.

comparison (not possible here) between assertions of this kind and the opposite opinions as maintained in the *Bella*, it is sufficient to consider Procopius' utter condemnation of Justinian's entire foreign policy, of the aggressive action in the West—which is a more typical manifestation of it than any other—and of the ceding of territory on other fronts (the Danube, Persia, Illyricum, etc.), gravely prejudicial to imperial power and prestige.⁸

This is evidently the significance of the reservations expressed in the *Bella* regarding the military preparations, the strategies and the general conduct of the war, which reveal deficiencies of every kind (thus, for example, *Bella*, 5, 20, 6; 24, 1f.; 7, 35, 9; 36, 4ff.; 37, 24ff.; 8, 13, 14, etc.); and Procopius certainly condemns the African war (*Bella*, 3, 10ff.), as being dangerous and wasteful (and in violation of the treaty between Zeno and Genseric), yet desired and imposed by Justinian. Even more condemnatory are Procopius' words regarding the defences of Illyricum (*Bella*, 7, 29, 2) and of the Danube regions: these latter had been weakened by the stationing of the Eruli in Dacia, contrary to what Justinian had hoped (*Bella*, 4, 4, 30; 6, 14, 35; 3, 33, 13ff.). The same goes for the Syrian and Commagenian frontiers: a very serious dereliction, such as the concession of the title of king to the barbarian Aretas so as to make him a defender of the imperial frontiers, turned out to be a complete disaster (*Bella*, 1, 17, 37ff.).

These are only examples, but I think they are sufficient; what in the *Bella* constitutes a reason for criticism and condemnation of Justinian's policies regarding warfare and frontiers, is proclaimed to his glory in the *Aed.*; the contrast could hardly be clearer, and perhaps only the hypothesis of a consistent ironical intention in the *Aed.* could usefully attenuate this contrast, though such a hypothesis would be by no means easy to maintain. And indeed nobody could discern irony in a text whose contents are so readily verifiable, dealing as it does with public buildings constructed during the reign of Justinian and therefore ascribed to his merit, according to a well

⁸ Regarding the Byzantines' attitude to barbarians, see material and bibl. in K. Lechner, *Hellenen und Barbaren in Weltbild der Byzantiner* (Diss. München 1954) 73ff.; for some aspects cf. Rubin, *RE*, 474–88; R. Benedicty, "Die Milieu-Theorie bei Prokop von Kaisareia", *Byzant. Zeitschrift* 55 (1962), 1–10; Z.V. Udal'cova, "Le monde vu par les historiens byzantines du IV^e au VI^e siècle", *Byzantinoslavica* 23 (1972), 209ff.; M. Cesa, "La politica di Giustiniano verso l'occidente nel giudizio di Procopio", *Athenaeum* 69 (1981), 389–409 (& lit.).

established tradition; who could regard as ironical the praises linked directly or indirectly to this real merit, under the eyes of all?⁹

So it seems that there was a change in Procopius' attitude towards the emperor; but for what reason? Perhaps it was the need to defend himself from a charge of disloyalty for the passages he had written in the *Bella*, since at the time he held an official position in the entourage of Belisarius; or perhaps he was genuinely grateful for some promotion or favour he had received. These are pure hypotheses, capable neither of proof nor disproof, just like the one which regards the *Aed.* as having been written on Justinian's orders. However, this latter hypothesis becomes attractive for two reasons: in the first place, it receives support from an assertion made by the author himself (*Aed.*, 1, 3, 1) to the effect that beginning the work with the churches dedicated to the Mother of God corresponded to the emperor's wishes (ἀρκτέον δὲ ἀπὸ . . . τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ αὐτῷ βασιλεῖ ἐξπιστάμεθα βουλομένῳ εἶναι); in the second place, it would mean that Procopius had not in fact changed his opinion or his attitude, if the 'panegyric' to the emperor had been 'commissioned' by the emperor himself.

But the problem of Procopius is not exhausted when we establish the relationship between the *Bella* and the *Aed.* regarding the judgement passed on Justinian, in other words between an attitude of severe criticism and one of panegyric; the contradictions in the historical writings of Procopius become aggravated, as we have seen, when the *Anecd.* are taken into consideration. That work constitutes a remarkably virulent attack on Justinian and Theodora, on Belisarius and his wife Antonina (cf. *Suidas*, IV, p. 211, 7–10); the contrast with the *Aed.* is extremely evident, and while the *Anecd.* do follow the general line of the *Bella* they tend to emphasise the negative qualities of the imperial family. But the *Bella* are in strident contrast with the *Anecd.* regarding Belisarius, whom Procopius in that work treats from the point of view of the faithful *assessor* he is, whereas in the *Anecd.* he vents his spleen against Belisarius as a person for whom he has no admiration, because the general lacks courage when

⁹ For an account of this question see again Rubin, *RE*, 572–75 and Av. Cameron, *Procopius*, 84–112; in particular cf. G. Downey, "The composition of Procopius' *de Aedificiis*", *Trans. Proc. Philol. Assoc.* 78 (1947), 182–3; and especially M. Whitby, "Justinian's bridge over the Sangarius and the date of Procopius' *de aedificiis*", *JHS* 105 (1985), 129–48.

important decisions have to be made, because he is a puppet in the hands of his wife, and because he has let Procopius down.¹⁰

A natural and immediate reaction is to suspect a forgery, in other words that the *Anecd.* are not by Procopius at all, but a careful reading—for which credit is especially due to F. Dahn¹¹—reveals unequivocally its Procopian authorship; so there was no way, and there is still no way, of avoiding the difficulty. It would certainly not be easy to solve this problem by seeking to ‘reconcile’ the three works, that is to say by stressing their similarities rather than their differences, so as to uncover a consistent attitude in the historian, who lived historical events from the inside and thus knew them well. On the other hand if—let us suppose—the invective of the *Anecd.* and the panegyric of the *Aed.*—which by definition we should expect to be less truthful—are in fact more reliable than the *Bella*, that is to say than the purely historical (and as such presumptively truthful) work, then this would be a highly significant aspect of Procopius the historian;¹² but if analogous events can be the pretext for praise in one text and for denigration in another, it is evident that Procopius the historian is dominated by the human, emotive aspect, with all that it involves, both positive and negative.¹³

In other words, one cannot reconcile the Justinian of the *Anecd.*, nothing less than a ‘demon’,¹⁴ with the Justinian of the *Aed.*, deserv-

¹⁰ For this aspect of the *Anecd.* a perspicacious commentary, in addition to Rubin, *RE*, 533–572 and O. Veh, *Prokop Anekdotia* (München 1961) 259–75, is especially in P. Maraval, *Procop de Césarée. Histoire secrète*, trans. and comm. (Paris 1990); for a direct reference to the problem see V. Grecu, “Bemerkungen zu Prokops Schriften. Das Verhältnis der Anekdotia zu dem Geschichtswerk über die Kriege”, *Bull. de la Section historique Acad. Roum.* 28/2 (1947), 233–40.

¹¹ In an essay which is still fundamental for certain aspects, *Prokopios von Kaisareia* (Berlin 1865) 287ff.; but see especially the studies by Rubin, *RE*, 527–33, J. Haury, “Zu Prokops Geheimgeschichte”, *Byzant. Zeitschrift* 34 (1934), 10–14; “Prokop verweist auf seine Anekdotia”, *ibid.*, 35 (1935), 1–4.

¹² It is he who states (Bella, I, 4) that “intensity is proper to rhetoric, invention to poetry and truth to history”. Cf., for example, G. Soyter, “Die Glaubwürdigkeit des Geschichtsschreibers Prokopios von Kaisareia”, *Byzant. Zeitschrift*, 44 (1951), 541ff.; especially O. Veh, *Zur Geschichtsschreibung und Weltauffassung des Prokop von Caesarea I–III, Wiss. Beilage zum Jahresbericht 1950–51 des Gymnasiums Bayreuth*, 1951–53.

¹³ For example, the policy of religious unity, condemned in the *Anecd.*, 13, 7, and praised in *Aed.*, 1, 1, 9.

¹⁴ This expression has especially attracted the interest of commentators on the *Anecd.*: cf., for example, B. Rubin, “Der Fürst der Dämonen. Ein Beitrag zur Interpretation von Prokops Anekdotia”, *Byzant. Zeitschrift* 44 (1951), 469–81; K. Gantar, “Kaiser Justinian als kopfloser Dämon”, *ibid.*, 54 (1961), 1ff.

ing of all praise (nor with the Justinian of the *Bella*, in many respects), just as one cannot reconcile the Belisarius of the *Bella*, Procopius' hero, with the wretch of the *Anecd.*: and it is not as if the author has discovered anything new which might explain his change of attitude. So if there was a change (and it would be difficult indeed to deny that there was one), its genesis needs to be traced. A chronological outline of the composition of the three works would undoubtedly cast some light on this fundamental problem: this too is a problem, as is well known, but it is one worthy of attention in view of its importance to the overall problem of Procopius. The chronological question, obviously, constitutes a presupposition.

The composition of the *Bella* gives rise to no particular difficulties. Books I–VII were written first, that is to say the *Bellum Persicum* (I–II, from 491 to 549), the *Bellum Vandalicum* (III–IV, from 395 to 548), and the *Bellum Gothicum* (V–VII, from 475 to 551). Book VIII, containing new information on the various fronts of the war up to 553/4, was added later, around that date. It is probable that the completion of Books I–VII took place in 550/1, their detailed treatment having presumably occupied the author for some considerable time.¹⁵

There is however a real chronological problem regarding the two 'non-historical' works, the *Aed.* and the *Anecd.* To begin with the *Aed.*, the prevailing tendency is to date the work to 554/5 on the basis of the arguments advanced by E. Stein,¹⁶ and especially in view of one important consideration: it is said to be impossible that the *Aed.* could have been written later than 7 May 558, when the church of Hagia Sophia collapsed, since there is no mention of this fact in the long and detailed description in Book I. This is certainly a much stronger argument than others advanced by Stein, such as that the portrayal of the Tzani as subdued (3, 6, 6, by the general Tzitta) would not have been possible after 557, when they devoted themselves to brigandage, but it is of somewhat limited importance, even though one is speaking of πολλοί (Agathias, 5, 1, 1ff.). On the other hand, what motive could Procopius have, in a text of evident panegyric intent, for recalling an episode which signified the failure of the measure adopted by Justinian for preventing revolts?

Of similar relevance, more or less, is the other argument, that is

¹⁵ For exact information on this subject the reader is referred, as ever, to Rubin, *RE*, 355–57 and Av. Cameron, *Procopius*, XII–XIII and 134–51.

¹⁶ *Histoire du B.-E.*, II 837.

to say that Procopius' idyllic depiction of the Samaritans under Justinian (5, 7, 16) would have been inadmissible after the their revolt in July 555; but as well as being of limited extent, this revolt was in fact of brief duration (Malal., fr. 48, *Exc. de insid.*, 173), so it is quite possible that three or four years later the situation might have reverted to the one described by Procopius (and the episode is hardly worth recalling, especially when one considers the author's tone and intention).

As regards the markedly panegyric character of the *Aed.*, the absence of any reference to the collapse of Hagia Sophia has little bearing on it (it was not Justinian's fault and for that reason to be excluded from a panegyric); in fact, if the church had already collapsed, a detailed description such as Procopius' would have been impossible with no church to describe. And if on the other hand the reconstruction had already begun, this fact would certainly have been proclaimed in a panegyric, as reflecting merit on Justinian. So are the *Aed.* to be dated to before 7 May 558 (even if not necessarily before 555)?

There is a well known chronological reference to the construction of the bridge over the river Sangarius (or Sakaria), which would appear to contradict such a conclusion. In the *Aed.* (5, 3, 10–11) Procopius asserts, or at any rate seems at first sight to assert, that at the time he was writing work on the bridge had just begun. Now according to Theophanes (*Chronogr.* 232, 27–233, 3 De Boer), work began in *annus mundi* 6052, the XXXIII year of Justinian, that is to say in 559–60; since the two texts refer, apparently, to the same event, it would seem that Procopius wrote the *Aed.* no earlier than 559. This raises an obvious problem if it is true that he could not have avoided mentioning the collapse of Hagia Sophia if he was writing after 7 May 558.¹⁷

One solution might well be Haury's hypothesis,¹⁸ that Book I, containing the description of Hagia Sophia, was written before the collapse, and Book V later. It is very likely that the work was composed at different times, and that it is unfinished and unrevised, and this

¹⁷ However the definition of *annus mundi* is rather uncertain; for this question, see V. Grumel, "L'année du monde dans la Chronographie de Théophane", *Échos d'Orient* 37 (1934), 396–408.

¹⁸ *Procopiana* (Augsburg 1891), 27–8.

would favour the hypothesis. However it is also possible that the uncertainty regarding both the *annus mundi* and the first month of the year in Theophanes is the source of the problem of dating the *Aed.* Finally, it is not impossible that the two texts mentioning the beginning of work on the bridge—Procopius and Theophanes—do not both refer to the same moment, but that the first refers to a slightly earlier stage.

And in fact, that Procopius is thinking of the planning stage rather than the actual constructional stage is suggested by his use of terms such as ἐγχειρέω and ἐνθύμημα (which semantically identify this stage) and by the correspondence, which occurs twice, between ἐγκεχείρηκεν . . . τανῶν, ἀρξάμενος . . . and τὸ κατ' ἀρχάς: a circumstance unlikely to be without significance, if a different meaning is to be attributed to the two terms, as seems probable. If the planning stage is taking place now, the commencement of work cannot have been earlier: the phrase “many times he seemed to devote himself to impossible undertakings” would appear to refer to the planning stage. So it is likely that the two propositions identify a single moment, prior to the commencement of work.¹⁹

If this is so there is much less discrepancy between the two testimonies, that is to say the planning stage may have been earlier than the collapse of Hagia Sophia, and the commencement of work on the bridge, somewhat later than the collapse, may have been in the following year. It is however certain that work on the bridge was completed in 562, as appears from the evidence of more than one writer (Paul the Silentiary, *Ekphrasis*, 928ff.; Agathias, *Anth. Pal.*, 9, 641). To suppose that the work lasted more than three or four years would seem unreasonable, and so would a dating of the composition of the *Aed.* before 558, even before 7 May of that year. In any case, assuming that one can justify the silence about the collapse of Hagia Sophia, a dating later than 559 would be difficult to maintain, given that Procopius' account halts at, and emphasises, the initial stage of work on the bridge, as appears from his use of terms (of which we have spoken above) and his account of the time taken

¹⁹ In this case it is unnecessary to suppose that Procopius refers to an intermediate stage of construction during the course of 561, as Mich. Whitby suggests (“Justinian's bridge”, 146), in view of the explicit and repeated reference to an initial stage (*ibid.*, 147–8). The juxtaposition ἐγκεχείρηκεν . . . τανῶν, ἀρξάμενος is surely significant, as stressing the chronological succession of the two actions.

to build the bridge: there would be no sense in mentioning the brevity of the period, and even the Divine assistance afforded, if the construction was already at a somewhat advanced stage. Evidently the emperor's great effort was a factor in the rapidity of the bridge's construction.²⁰

How should we understand the *Aed.* if they are really to be dated to the late 550s and not to the beginning of the decade? The flourishing of encomiastic literature around those years—we have already mentioned Paul the Silentiary, Agathias, Corippus—makes us suppose that the *Aed.* were an important part of that literature, if not its model; such flourishing was not spontaneous, but part of a large programme of propaganda. It is quite likely that general political conditions around 560 were better than in earlier years (especially ten years earlier), but it is much less likely that recent developments were sufficient to completely overturn Procopius' judgement on Justinian, based on decades of observation and experience, which in general certainly remained unaltered.²¹ But one cannot reach an understanding of the panegyrical *Aed.* except by means of the condemnatory *Anecd.*

The chronology of the *Anecd.* is, then, an essential presupposition, and like that of the *Aed.* it is problematical. The point of departure is the reference to thirty-two years of the reign having passed when Procopius was writing (23, 1; 24, 29 and 33; 18, 33 gives the same sense, although without an explicit reference to the length of the reign); the question is whether these thirty-two years are to be counted from 527, when Justinian succeeded his uncle Justin I and became emperor, or from 518, when Justin became emperor, though the government was already in the hands of Justinian. In the first case the *Anecd.* are to be dated from 559–60; in the second, from 549–50. Since the hypothesis of counting the years of a reign from an unofficial date seems precarious at best, the point of departure does not favour this second case. Moreover, in the *Anecd.* the two periods are clearly distinguished (18, 45); and it is significant that in *Bella*, 2, 5, 1, we

²⁰ On this subject cf. also G. Downey, "The composition of Procopius' *de Aedificiis*", *Trans. Amer. Philol. Assoc.*, 78 (1947), 171–83 and J.A.S. Evans, "The dates of the *Anecdota* and the *De aedificiis* of Procopius", *Classical Philology* 64 (1969), 29–30.

²¹ There are helpful observations in J. Haury, "Prokop und der Kaiser Justinian" *Byzant. Zeitschrift* 37 (1937), 1–9; full material and discussion in B. Rubin, *Das Zeitalter Iustians* (Berlin 1960), 197–226.

read that the thirteenth year of Justinian's reign is coming to an end; since this passage refers to the year 540, it is evident that Procopius calculated Justinian's reign from the year he succeeded Justin.

So, of the two hypotheses I prefer the one which dates the thirty-two years of Justinian's reign from 527. The *Anecd.* would thus have been composed around 559. Considerations suggesting otherwise seem to be of little weight, such as the notion that the work is a commentary on Books I–VII of the *Bella*, and thus unlikely to have been written ten years later (as though nothing had happened in the mean while); or the observation that nothing can be surely dated later than 550.²² A sufficient reason is the alteration in roles and personal relations affecting Procopius and Belisarius, and the consequent diminishing of the principal concerns of the earlier years; in other words, Belisarius had fallen into disgrace, Theodora was dead, and Procopius no longer took part in imperial events, or at least not from the inside. He therefore knew less about them, and was less interested in them; so if he was to write an invective, he was bound to refer to the years he knew best, even though its basic premises took form in his mind long after the events described. That many rather than few years had gone by is suggested by a statement made by the author himself, to the effect that he had long hesitated before beginning this work, despite his great desire to do so (I, 6); where could we find space for this long period of gestation, if the *Anecd.* were written as early as 550, that is to say around the time of the completion of Books I–VII of the *Bella*? It seems therefore probable that they were written in the late 550s.

Whereas it is true that nothing in the *Anecd.* can be certainly dated after 550, it is also true that there is no reference incompatible with the successive period; but it is difficult to attain certainty in this area: for example, regarding the assertion (23, 1) that Justinian, contrary to an ancient tradition, refused to release debtors to the State, not making any provision of the kind in thirty-two years of reign. But in fact such a provision was made, as appears from *Nov.* 147 (15 April 553 or 554), which suggests that the work was written earlier than that date; yet how can we be sure that the “nothing of the kind” does not refer specifically to the “many times” of the initial

²² There is an outline of the problem and a discussion in Av. Cameron, *Procopius*, 49–66.

proposition (οὐχ ἅπαξ μόνον ἀλλὰ πολλάκις), and therefore that for the author that single instance was insufficient to acquit the emperor from blame?

That the *Anecd.* were written at any rate in the second half of the decade is also suggested by a comparison between their proem and the proem to Book VIII of the *Bella*. The latter sets out the criteria followed in the preceding books, I–VII, for the subdivision of the material treated, explaining that the various events are grouped together according to region or geographical area. So Books I–VII are arranged according to exclusively geographical criteria. The later part of the work could not however be arranged in the same way, because the written history had already been made public all over the empire, and it was therefore impossible to add the events which happened subsequently. Thus, later developments of the wars were dealt with in a separate book, Book VIII, which consequently lacked the unity imposed by the geographical criteria and acquired instead a predominantly chronological structure, dictated by the need to organise the material in systematic fashion.

We can call this criterion a chronological one, because it was intended to satisfy the need for an updating consisting of additional material, referring to events after the end of Book VII, independently of the geographical area in which they took place; and this is the character of Book VIII, according to the explicit statement of the author. Now, in the proem to the *Anecd.* we find the very same words and the same concepts: there can be no doubt that one was based on the other. But which of the two was written first? The answer would seem to be quite clear, because, as regards the criteria followed in the arrangement of material (which are the specific subject of both proems), only geographical considerations are mentioned in *Bella*, 8, 1, whereas in the *Anecd.* there is mention of time as well as place.

The very presence of two criteria rather than one suggests that the author was thinking of something extra, when he was writing the *Anecd.*, in respect of the proem to Book VIII, and if so, he must have been thinking of Book VIII itself, when he mentioned an additional criterion, since Books I–VII were covered by the first criterion. This is a good reason for believing that Book VIII was written earlier than the *Anecd.*; further support is provided by the fact that the additional criterion mentioned in the *Anecd.* refers explicitly to the arrangement of events according to time (ἐπὶ καιρῶν), such as

characterised Book VIII. If this is so, the *Anecd.* are later than Book VIII; and since it could not have been written before 554, or thereabouts, the *Anecd.* are in all probability to be dated to the end of the 550s, that is to say the later of the two possible dates, as indeed other indications lead us to suppose.

So, are the *Aed.* and the *Anecd.* of more or less the same date, some ten years later than the first and much larger portion of the *Bella*?²³ It would seem so; there are some reasons for thinking so, even though a little uncertainty remains; but it means that two works of opposite tendency were expressions of a single historical moment. It is vital at this point to know which of the two was written first, but unfortunately it is very difficult, since the 'cross-overs' between the two texts are negligible: in this connection a passage in the *Aed.* (18, 38) would be decisive, if it were not irredeemably corrupted, or rather recoverable only on the basis of a chronological preconception. In this passage, concerning the flooding of Edessa, the author refers to an earlier writing of his: we learn nothing from this, if the text has to be amended to favour one or the other hypothesis.²⁴

If the two works were composed only a short time apart, as seems likely, it would appear, since they are of opposing tendency, that they were deliberately conceived in opposition to each other; we can easily see how this came about if, shall we say, the *Aed.* were written to an imperial 'commission', as part of the emperor's propaganda campaign (the existence of which becomes clear from the writings of other authors around this time, as we have seen). But the imperial 'commission' may also have been dictated by the desire to ensure that Procopius withdrew the criticisms and reservations he had expressed at length in the *Bella*, regarding the emperor's conduct.

If this is so, it is evident that the *Anecd.* must have been a response, not intended for public circulation while members of the ruling party were still alive, intended to confirm the consistency of the author's position *vis à vis* the same ruling party. The *Anecd.* must have circulated mainly in dissident circles. Procopius in his writings was to some extent the spokesman of the dissidents, and continued to be so, even though he was 'constrained' to write in the opposite sense;

²³ Different arguments tending to substantially the same conclusion are in G. Downey, *Constantinople in the age of Justinian* (Norman, Oklahoma 1960) 156–59; Evans, *op. cit.*, 29–30.

²⁴ Cf., for example, Haury, *Źu Prok. Geheimg.*, *op. cit.*, 10–14.

he was concerned to make it known to his friends that nothing had changed, despite appearances. Of course, this view of the *Anecd.* presupposes that the *Aed.* were written first, if only by a little.

And this is most likely, if the *Aed.* were written in the first months of 558, before the collapse of Hagia Sophia; on the other hand, the hypothesis of the priority of the *Anecd.*, linked to a later dating for the *Aed.* (from 559), encounters the well known obstacle of the silence regarding the collapse of Hagia Sophia. However even in this case we might discern the same intention in the mind of Procopius: fighting his battle against the imperial establishment, alongside his own class, by means of a work of withering invective; publicly aligning himself immediately afterwards with the official party, by means of the encomiastic *Aed.* There could be no better way of protecting himself, deflecting suspicion and facilitating the secret circulation of the *Anecd.*; perhaps this was not the noblest line of conduct, but it was undoubtedly an effective one.²⁵

Procopius' invective in the *Anecd.* was not however an isolated voice; the *Royal Exhortation* of Agapetus the Deacon²⁶ was produced by the same climate, though with its own inspiration and point of view. It was written before the death of Theodora, unless the protection invoked for Justinian and his wife at the end of the book is a literary fiction. Propaganda is an important motive; we have already referred to the flourishing panegyric literature, most probably promoted by the emperor; we may regard the *Topographia Christiana* of Cosmas Indicopleustes²⁷ in the same light, or the chronicle of Malalas;²⁸ Procopius is a man of the ruling party, on the one hand (or rather of a part of it, that of Belisarius), but he is disappointed by the rul-

²⁵ It seems certain that the inspiration of the work is located in the condemnation of, and the invective against, the couples Justinian-Theodora and Belisarius-Antonina; this is not, in principle, to exclude the hypothesis that we may discern in the *Anecd.* various thematic nuclei (three of them are identified by K. Adshead, "The Secret History of Procopius and its genesis", *Byzantion* 63 [1993], 5-28); doubts derive mainly from the difficulty of defining the context and motivations of each nucleus.

²⁶ Cf. R. Romano, "Retorica e cultura a Bisanzio: due *Fürstenspiegel* a confronto", *Vichiana* 14 (1985), 299-316; P. Volpe Cacciatore, "La *Scheda regia* di Agapeto Diacono: tradizione scolastica e pensiero politico", in *Metodologie della ricerca nella Tarda Antichità, Atti del I conv. dell'Ass. di Studi Tardoantichi* (Napoli 1990), 563-68.

²⁷ For this text see W. Wolska-Conus, *La Topographie chrétienne de Cosmas Indicopleustes. Théologie et Science au VI^e siècle* (Paris 1962).

²⁸ See the remarks of R.D. Scott, "Malalas, the *Secret History* and Justinian's propaganda", *Dumbarton Oaks Pap.* 39 (1985), 99-109.

ing party, on the other. These two aspects are kept clearly distinct in the two works we have been discussing so far, but coexist, to some extent at least, in the *Bella*.²⁹

Procopius was writing contemporary history, so he made ample use of proems,³⁰ and inserted speeches, sometimes contrasting ones, using them to clarify his own thoughts and to express his opinions: these are among the most significant features that make the *Bella* part of a well established tradition in classical historiography. In this connection his point of reference was undoubtedly Thucydides, but the influence of Herodotus is also evident (somewhat less significantly, the division into geographical area—Persian, Gothic, Vandal—recalls the regional division found in Appian). With regard to Thucydides, it is easy to see how Procopius' use *imitatio* is so extensive as to play an important part in the interpretation of his work as a historian;³¹ and in effect the natural reaction, once the full extent of the *mimesis* becomes apparent, is bound to be one of perplexity. How valuable is an historian who has such frequent recourse to a classical model such as Thucydides? One may suspect that Procopius' desire to write in the Thucydidean manner got the better of his desire for a scrupulous and objective exposition of facts; if this be so, it must compromise his credibility as an historian.

However it is evident that the reader of Procopius is not in the presence of a mere rhetorical exercise, which indicates that each case must be judged on its merits: there remains the problem of understanding, apart from the cases of pure imitation, the intention of the historian when he constructs (if not 'constrains') on a classical model the narrative of a contemporary event.³²

²⁹ There is a full outline of this matter in A. Carile, "Consenso e dissenso fra propaganda e fronda nelle fonti narrative dell'età giustiniana", in G. Archi (ed.), *L'imperatore Giustiniano. Storia e mito* (Milano 1976) 37–93.

³⁰ The fullest information on this subject is to be found in H. Lieberich, *Studien zu den Proömien in der griechischen und byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung*, I–II, (München 1976) 37–93.

³¹ Cf., for example, L.R. Cresci, "Aspetti della ΜΙΜΗΣΙΣ in Procopio", in *Ἀφιέρωμα εἰς G. Schirò* (Athens 1987) 232–49; the fullest collection of material is to be found in the studies by H. Braun, *Procopius Caesariensis quatenus imitatus sit Thucydidem* (Diss. Erlangen 1885) and *Die Nachahmung Herodots durch Prokop* (Progr. Nürnberg 1894).

³² On this subject opposing positions are espoused by M. Brückner (*Zur Beurteilung des Geschichtsschreibers Prokop von Caes.*, Programm Ansbach 1896) and J. Haury (in *Progr. Des K. Wilhelms-Gymm. München*, 16896, 1–10); pertinent observations are to be found in F. Bornmann, "Motivi tucididei in Procopio", in *Atene e Roma*, 19, 1974, 138 sgg.

An especially interesting case is that of the eulogy of Belisarius (7, 1, 1ff.), which recalls in various respects the eulogy of Pericles in Thucydides (2, 65), despite one basic difference: Belisarius was still alive, and his replacement was due to the envy of Justinian on the one hand, and to his having renounced the kingdom of Italy on the other, whereas Pericles was dead, and was not to be blamed for anything. But it is only an apparent difference, probably, beside the similarities of expository construction and of lexis: the 'responsibilities' of men play a vital part in the history as it is conceived by Procopius (in contrast to Thucydides' conception of Pericles), as they are part of his anti-imperial interpretation of events, events he himself witnessed and to some extent influenced. But the same context provided indications of his later demolition of Belisarius, whose failures are imputed to his decision of fidelity to the emperor (severe condemnation of successors is a theme common to Thucydides and Procopius).³³

The centrepiece is however the 'slap' administered by Procopius to Justinian, which would certainly not escape his cultured readers, by investing Belisarius and not the emperor with the role played in Thucydides by Pericles; this is an obvious consideration, evidently, but symptomatic of a *mimesis* which is not merely a literary device, but an integral part of Procopius' historiography; and this historiography is not the mere chilly listing of facts, as it sometimes may appear to be.³⁴

Other aspects of the *Bella* are probably to be seen in the same perspective, such as the proems and the excursus already mentioned; the case which especially attracts our attention is when the two elements are integrated, and in this context geographical material assumes importance. The modern reader is bound to wonder about the role played by these introductory sections, given their *sui generis* character; it is the historical material which is of interest here, since the

³³ See the remarks of H.J. Diesner, "Eine Thukydides-parallele bei Prokop", *Rheinisches Museum* 114 (1971), 93–4.

³⁴ In addition to the specific studies of Procopius already cited, one might add C.D. Gordon, "Procopius and Justinian's financial policies", *Phoenix* 13 (1959), 23–30; on the tradition relating to Belisarius, a useful study is H. Schreiner, "Über die älteste Form der Belisarsage", *Byzant. Zeitschrift* 21 (1912), 54–64; also of interest is R. Cantarella, "La Διήγησις ὁρασιότατη τοῦ θαυμαστοῦ ἐκείνου λεγομένου Βελισαρίου. Testo critico con una appendice: Sulla fortuna della leggenda di Belisario", *Studi Bizantini* 4 (1935), 153–202.

way it conceived to some extent evades the most natural explanation, that is to say as a 'link' to the period with which another historian concluded his narrative.

It is in any case symptomatic that the point of departure should be a different one in each of the three 'geographical' sections composing the *Bella*: the *B. Pers.* begins with death of Arcadius, the *B. Vand.* with the division of the empire into the two *partes*, and the *B. Goth.* more or less with the year 476; while from Procopius' point of view the role of historians such as Eunapius, Priscus and Zosimus is undeniable, it is nevertheless true that such a role has a very different connotation from the direct relationship linking Thucydides to Xenophon (or Cratippus to Theopompus), or Timaeus to Polybius, Ephorus to his son, etc., in the classical period, or Procopius himself to Agathias, and Agathias to Theophylact Simocatta or Menander the Guardsman.³⁵ The same in general can be said for Eustathius of Epiphania, who is not of course comparable as an author of universal history until 502–3; given that we may suppose a degree of contact regarding the taking of the city of Amidas (of which Procopius speaks at the beginning of his narrative), the importance of the episode in the general scheme is not such as to make it a point of reference for Procopius' vision of history.

So it is unlikely that historical *excursus* of such a kind, as introductions to contemporary history, should have a logic in the *Fortsetzung* sense; a classical model does not seem to be present, at least not in strict terms, even though the *pentecontaetia* model might be cited, still in the Thucydidean mode, only that the point of reference should be located in the presuppositions of the Peloponnesian war, developed ideologically and politically at the end of the *Persikā*, rather than in the interruption of Herodotus' *Histories*. However the three different events which begin the three sections of the *Bella*, and the different geographical areas dealt with, as well as the geographical background that distinguishes each of them, make one think that the principle model was that of the *logoi*, even if only of the basic conception. So the model is Herodotus in general terms (the influence

³⁵ On the subject of *Fortsetzung*, the relationship—certainly a problematic one—between Thucydides and his continuators is of special interest, and so too is that between Timaeus and Polybius; on this subject there are interesting passages in S. Mazzarino, *Il pensiero storico classico*, I–II, 1–2 (Bari 1966), I, 347ff., II, 1, 120ff.

of Herodotus on Procopius has been amply documented in its various forms); the model is Herodotus' as regards form, inserted into a general scheme which to some extent recalls that of Appian.³⁶

But whoever looked to the *Bella* for a more or less exact reproduction of Herodotus' scheme would not find much (or perhaps would find something similar in the *excursus* on the region of the Euxine Sea [8, 1, 7ff.], too closely connected, however, to an ethnographical model which is only partly Herodotus', just as only certain elements are common to the Egyptian *excursus* and the Scythian one). And it is obvious that in the compositional perspective of the *Bella*, there can be no analogy between Herodotus' *logoi* and the *logoi* of Procopius, in the sense proposed; and that the latter are to be identified with the three sections composing the *Bella* (in this sense, large *logoi* including the smaller *logoi* in Herodotus' sense).³⁷

The different nature of the *logoi* in Herodotus and in Procopius places the problem of the *Bella* on a completely different level, as is natural; there is still the problem of the unity of Herodotus' work, also in relation to the *logoi*, but it is undeniable that their inclusion responds to a functional requirement: disparity of proportion and of tone, as well as unkept promises (the case of the *Assyrioi logoi*, 1, 84) may indicate lack of revision, and are in any case explicable in terms of unity. But is there a problem of unity for the *Bella*? The fact that there are three sections (Persian, Vandal, Gothic), and the presence of proems to each of them (as well as the proem to Book VIII), with their own geographical settings, might suggest three *logoi*, as we have proposed, but are not enough to establish that each was developed autonomously.

In other words, when Procopius embarked on the *Bella*, did he intend to write the whole work (or at least Books I–VII) in the way it is in fact written? He himself speaks of the composition of the first seven books in the proem to Book VIII; there is no doubt that a subdivision on material based on geographical area could well have been part of a unified plan, even though it is natural that each sec-

³⁶ See also, for an overall view, R. Scott, *op. cit.* 61–74.

³⁷ For an account of the *excursus*, cf. I. Kapitany, "Griechische Geschichtsschreibung und Ethnographie in der Spätantike", *Annales Univ. Scient. Budapest, de Eötvös nominatae, sectio classica*, 5–6 (1977–8), 129–34; discussion in M. Cesa, "Etnografia e geografia nella visione storica di Procopio di Cesarea", *Studi classici e orientali* 32 (1982), 189–215.

tion was composed autonomously. On the other hand the very fact that the *ιστορία ποικίλη* of Book VIII (8, 1, 2) is presented as a necessary solution, and thus as an alteration of the criteria adopted for the earlier books, would seem to result from a unified design, as too does the 'publication' in every part of the empire.³⁸

But all this might only be evidence of a unity of approach and of form, important maybe, but not essential for our understanding of Procopius the historian; what *is* essential for such an understanding is the way he sees the contemporary events in which he personally took part, if there is anything to be gathered on that subject, and, especially, if a unified point of view guides his vision of men and events. Modern historiography has always followed closely the thought of the historian from Caesarea, bearing in mind the relationship between the *Bella* and the two later works, and seeking to identify the logic and the motivation behind his judgements; it is a perspective which may be all the more productive if there exist pre-suppositions common to all three sections: in practical terms, a link which ideally connects the judgements on, and evaluations of, deeds and protagonists (and from the same perspective one should investigate the significance assumed by the *Aed.* and the *Anecd.*, if they were written almost ten years after Books I–VII of the *Bella*, as is quite possible).

Among the possible means of identifying a unifying link, it is worth returning at this point to the proems and historical excursus used to introduce the contemporary history in the three sections of the *Bella*, not to consider them in relation to earlier historians, but to pay some attention to the date when each section begins (*λελέξεται δὲ πρῶτον* [*Pers.* and *Vand.*] and *ἐπειπὼν πρότερον* [*Goth.*]). Now, it is evident that these historical *excursus* are linked to the crucial turn of events in 395 which led to the division of the empire into two *partes*, east and west, ruled respectively by Arcadius and Honorius; and this is the very date which begins the retrospective excursus of the Vandal section (*Bella*, 3, 1, 1).

It cannot be entirely a coincidence that the same section contains a proem with the most extensive geographical vision, including an ample historical perspective on the theatre of action of the *Bella*: a

³⁸ Aspects of the problem are dealt with in Rubin, *Das Zeitalter Justinians*, 178; Veh, *Zur Geschichtsschreibung*, 13; G. Gantar, "Bemerkungen zu Prokops Kriegsgeschichte" *Živa Antika* 12 (1962–3), 357ff.

perspective which is proper to this proem alone, and which deals with the deepest roots of contemporary history, the oldest ones, also in relation to the other two sections: going back to Constantine. One might add that the Vandal War was the period when Procopius was participating most actively in events, in company with Belisarius (though he had been in Belisarius' company before, in the east).

There is reason for thinking that the Vandal section played a central role in the compositional scheme of the *Bella*; and in fact the Persian section begins in 408, with the death of Arcadius, and the problems relating to the succession of Theodosius, who was only a child. It was the moment of transition from the first to the second generation after the division of the empire; the solution adopted was in practice a concession, as Theodosius II came to the throne on the death of his father, but the guardian appointed for him was Yazdagird, the king of Persia, Rome's traditional enemy. Yazdagird respected the agreement (1, 2, 7–8), but his successor Varahran invaded the territory of the Romans; the solution adopted for Theodosius II created a precedent which would be characteristic feature of Justinian's policies.³⁹

This might have been the reason for the choice of such a date for the introduction to the Persian section: what was Procopius' judgement on such a defence of the kingdom is easily understood in relation to Justinian's policy towards the barbarians of the east. It was certainly a negative judgement, read here between the lines; though it was referred to, as was the division of the empire, which resulted in the episode of Arcadius and Theodosius II.

We come now to the third section, the Gothic one: the beginning is signalled from 474, but in practice the real point of reference is the end of the reign of Romulus Augustulus, in other words the fall of the Roman empire in the west. Is there a connection between this date and the division of the empire about eighty years later? If there is, as there seems to be, it must be a purely ideal one: the end of the west empire is the point of arrival for a process which has its roots in the division. As an easterner, Procopius saw the west-

³⁹ Various aspects of this problem are dealt with in the *Atti del convegno dell'Accademia dei Lincei La Persia nel Medio Evo* (Rome 1971); and especially in K.H. Ziegler, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Rom und dem Partherreich* (Wiesbaden 1964); also of interest, though less directly, is Mich. Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian Theophylact Simocatta on Persian Warfare* (Oxford 1988).

ern episode with the detachment and sense of superiority of one who saw the future of the empire as nothing but the empire of the east with its centre in Constantinople. The disasters of the west, decadent, in the hands of barbarians but nevertheless Roman, must have wounded the sensibility (and the patriotism?) of Procopius, yet it was an inevitable process, and its point of arrival must have been felt by Procopius as a turning-point: the moment when the eastern empire gathered in the inheritance of the western empire, which in fact no longer existed.⁴⁰

If this be so, then it is of central importance in the Procopian interpretation of imperial history; the very fact that it marks the beginning of a section such as the Gothic one might be a clue. Furthermore, his position is rather clearly stated in the context of the *translatio imperii*; it is in some respects an unconventional position, in that it anticipates concepts not yet specifically formulated, although discussed in other contexts. The Byzantine empire could only come into being by the death of the Roman one.⁴¹

So, the causes of the ending of the universal empire are to be sought in Theodosius' division into two *partes*; another reason was Constantine's decision to transfer the centre of empire to the east; the results were the end of one *pars* after eighty years, and the incursions of the eastern barbarians, due to the fragmentation of forces. Seen in these terms, the Procopius' vision appears consistent, as though the succession of the empire of Constantinople to the empire of Rome were a consequence of Constantine's epoch-making choice of an eastern capital, made possible by Theodosius' division into the two *partes*.⁴² The corollary of this point of view probably results from the different, indeed utterly contrasting, ideas Procopius has of the

⁴⁰ For the Byzantine point of view on the western *pars* of the empire, see W.E. Kaegi Jr., *Byzantium and the decline of Rome* (Princeton 1968); for some particular aspects see A. Momigliano, "La caduta senza rumore di un impero nel 476", *Annali Scuola Normale Superiore Pisa* III, 2 (1973), 397–418, then in *Storia e storiografia antica* (Bologna 1987), 359–79; L. Cracco Ruggini, "Come Bisanzio vide la fine dell'impero d'occidente", in *La fine dell'impero romano d'occidente*, Istituto di studi romani (Roma 1978), 71ff.; J. Irmscher, "Das Ende des weströmischen Kaisertum in der byzantinischen Literatur", *Klio* 60 (1978), 397ff.

⁴¹ For the elaboration and the basis of this concept, cf. for example F. Dölger, "Rom in der Gedankewelt der Byzantiner", in *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt* (Ettal 1953), 70ff.

⁴² On the Roman reaction to Constantinople, cf. G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451* (Paris 1984), 70ff.

barbarians, who are faithless, cruel, lawless, etc., in the east (e.g. 1, 17, 47ff.; 18, 36ff.; 2, 5, 26; 9, 8; 19, 26ff.; 26, 2; 7, 38, 19ff.; etc.) but are moderate, tolerant, wise in government, etc., in the west.⁴³

Prominent in this respect are the figures of Theoderic and Amalasuntha, and of Totila, all examples of wisdom, moderation, good government, generosity, etc. (e.g. 5, 1, 39; 2, 5; 4, 1–2; 7, 6, 4; 8, 1–9, 1; etc.); it is evident that Procopius' thought tended to the legitimisation of the barbarians of the west, who preside wisely over the western regions of the empire. On the other hand the barbarians of the east were to be combated without mercy; this is another trace of the unitary conception of the three sections, as set out in the proems and developed in the central theme of the *Bella*: Justinian and his policies (his wars being merely the concrete expression of his policies).

In this context we discern what might appear to be a contradiction: Procopius condemns the aggressive policy of Justinian in the west, his mission to 'liberate' the western regions, as the manifestation of the will to reconquer the universal empire. At the same time he condemns the emperor's eastern policy, consisting of concessions and subsidies made to the worst of the barbarians, as intolerable weakness, which only encourages aggression and blackmail (e.g. that of Chosroes in 1, 26, 1ff.), and severely wastes the public funds, despite the raising of tributes (e.g. *Anecd.*, 30, 32ff.). What, then, was the policy that Procopius advocated, since he repudiated both force and diplomacy?

But there is evidently no contradiction if his position is understood as the expression of his fundamental notion, that is to say that the western *pars* had no further role to play in the universal empire, as a result of the decisions of Theodosius and Constantine; the barbarians who governed the west did so with moderation and wisdom, and therefore a campaign of reconquest was inappropriate, or rather—one might add—it contradicted one of the laws of history. This is the reason for his condemnation of aggression, when directed against the west; it is not a condemnation of the use of force on principle, since Procopius indicates that force should indeed be employed against the eastern barbarians, in place of the expensive concessions granted by the emperor, and would certainly be possible, if the greatest part

⁴³ See the account and bibliography in Cesa, *St.Cl.Or.*, *op. cit.*, 189–215.

of the armed forces were not employed on a useless policy of conquest in the west.⁴⁴

Procopius' position was therefore diametrically opposed to the policies of Justinian. It attained its most violent expression in the *Anecd.*, and was interrupted and contradicted in the *Aed.* (as we have seen). We may understand in the same terms the historian's position regarding Belisarius. He was undoubtedly Procopius' hero at the time they were in close collaboration, but even at that time their good relations were interrupted, since there is a violent attack on Belisarius in the *Anecd.* Now, it would seem certain that the break occurred during the year when, after the capture of Ravenna, the Goths themselves offered Belisarius the crown (6, 29, 18; 29, 26), and did so insistently. Belisarius did not refuse the offer, he merely said that he would do nothing of the kind against the emperor's wishes (6, 29, 19–20).⁴⁵

The behaviour of the general, who wanted to make the Goths believe he intended to accept the crown, and the attempts by certain jealous officials to make Justinian believe so too (6, 30, 1), led to a cooling in the relations between Belisarius and the emperor; at this point, Procopius' praise of Belisarius' behaviour, and of his abilities even compared with those of the other generals (7, 1, 1ff.), seems especially intended to neutralise the slanders which had poisoned Justinian's mind against Belisarius, and thus—if the context allows us to suppose so—his eventual willingness to accept the Goths' proposal.⁴⁶ But evidently, when the moment came, nothing would convince the emperor, and Belisarius had not the courage to break his word.

This was not at all what Procopius wanted. An independent western kingdom ruled by Belisarius would have been perfectly in accordance with his idea of the eastern empire as the successor to the Roman empire. Disappointed in this respect, he came to believe that his years in Belisarius' service had been guided by this one objective, both before and after 540, with diminishing enthusiasm as his secret desire seemed less and less likely to be realised. His disappointment exploded into rage in the *Anecd.*, as we have seen.

⁴⁴ Cf. Cesa, *Athen.*, *op. cit.*, 389ff., [lit.].

⁴⁵ On the attitude of Procopius, see Rubin, *RE*, 349–54; cf. the point of view of Av. Cameron, *Procopius*, 159ff., 230 and 261ff. and bibliography.

⁴⁶ On this matter see Rubin, *RE*, 464–66.

The key to all this would appear to be in the proems, if we have seen the matter aright. While the centrality of the second section, linked as it is to the reading of the proems, also implies its prior composition, this cannot be categorically asserted (in such a case, naturally, opportune observations would have clarified the sequence of events according to their actual chronological order, e.g. 3, 1, 1), and perhaps it is of no importance. It is certain that this crucial role of the Vandal section from the point of view of Procopius the historian emerges from the presence of the most extensive geographical *excursus* (1, 4ff.), and from the fact that the same problem is given importance in Book VIII (6, 1ff.), the book which, as we have seen, takes up and completes the themes of the first seven books according to a unifying logic.

The fundamental theme is the division between Europe and Asia, a very lively subject in the context of the universal empire, one that had been debated in relation to the expansion of Achaemenid Persia (Herodotus felt it deeply), but especially lively in the context of Alexander's imperialism. It is significant that Procopius preserves traces of the propaganda and polemics of that time, in speaking of the regions to the east and to the west of the Tanais, saying that they belong to Europe: we might think of Polycleitus of Larissa, and of the polemics mentioned by Strabo.⁴⁷

So the unity of the *Bella* establishes the consistency of Procopius' thought; the premises outlined in the *Bella* certainly reach their logical conclusion in the *Anecd.*; the position of the *Aed.* is less clear, but if there really exists the relationship indicated above between the *Anecd.* and the *Aed.*, one might intuit a nexus in the global vision of one who has developed an idea of the history he has lived through, and has survived without having to make opportunistic compromises (in that case, he would have done better to follow Justinian rather than Belisarius). In the late 550s it would be difficult to find an interest dictated by personal ambition in the succession of the two works,

⁴⁷ *FGrHist*, 128 F 7, Strab., XI, 509 D. In reality there were no regions belonging to Europe east of the Tanais, as that river was the border between Europe and Asia; with the propaganda of Alexander the Tanais was shifted eastwards as far as the Caspian Sea, so that regions really belonging to Asia (and not subject to Alexander) came to be included in Europe, so that all Asia was in fact dominated by Alexander. On the Europe-Asia division in late antiquity, cf. for example J. Fischer, *Oriens-Occidens-Europa. Begriff und Gedanke "Europ" in der Spätantike und im frühen Mittelalter* (Göttingen 1951).

but perhaps Procopius was more influenced by the will to survive, on the one hand, than by the desire to save face, on the other.

Historiography, Politics, Religion. From Procopius to Agathias

All this, if true, is a reflection of the active and sometimes impassioned participation of the historian from Caesarea in the political life of his time. It is the manifestation of a temperament which found its ideal expression in the writing of contemporary history, history in which he was himself frequently a participant, compelled to take up a position in the face of opposing interests. It is surprising in one respect, but comprehensible in another, that the Church, and Christianity itself, play but a slight role in his historiographical perspective: it is surprising that we hear barely an echo, in a soul as ardent as his, of the dispute within Christendom and of the presence of the Church in political events, but then it is comprehensible that he would not wish to add a further reason for conflict to his already strained relations with the official imperial line.

These were probably matters which held little interest for Procopius,⁴⁸ attracted as he was by the politico-military reality of the empire: this must have been a dominant interest indeed, if it led to a clean break with the themes proper to, let us say, an Evagrius, whereas his attention was certainly not drawn to the historiographical experience of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, on one hand, or of Zosimus, on the other. What did draw his attention was classicism, as is well known: if one must speak of scepticism, one can probably speak of it in this sense, given that his public position made it necessary for him to be Christian in a Christian empire.⁴⁹

But to call such an attitude scepticism is perhaps inaccurate, since it is in large measure the result of the awkward coexistence of an essentially classical—in other words pagan—culture and the contemporary faith (in any case long established, the expression of the

⁴⁸ On Procopius' attitude to Christianity, cf. for example the account and discussion in Rubin, *RE*, 331–40 and Av. Cameron, *Procopius*, 113–33; G. Downey, "Paganism and Christianity in Procopius", *Church History* 19 (1949), 89–102; J.A.S. Evans, "Christianity and Paganism in Procopius of Caesarea", *Greek, Roman and Byzant. Studies* 12 (1971), 81–100.

⁴⁹ See the observations of Av. Cameron, "The 'Scepticism' of Procopius", *Historia* 15 (1966), 466–82.

official imperial position). It would seem then that what is expressed in *Anecd.* 13, 7⁵⁰ is not the condemnation of a religious faith (and the corresponding defence of another faith), but rather a pretext for condemning Justinian, in this case as a persecutor (whether of pagans or of heretics was of little importance, apparently), highly intent on Christian unity. This same subject of religious unity becomes a reason for praising Justinian in *Aed.*, 1, 1, 9.⁵¹

Can one speak of scepticism in these terms?⁵² We seem to detect a condemnation of sectarianism in *Bella*, 5, 3, 6ff., a well known passage which is apparently a most pointed expression of scepticism; in fact, however, it is more likely that what we have here is a sense of disgust for religious controversies, resulting in a desire on Procopius' part to dissociate himself from the Christians: δόξης ἕνεκεν ἦν Χριστιανοὶ ἐν σφίσιν αὐτοῖς ἀντιλέγουσιν ἀμφιγνοοῦντες. There is no disdain in these words, probably, but Procopius certainly means that he does not identify with the Christians; on the other hand, no very great effort of the imagination is required to see how problematical such disputes must have appeared to one who, like Procopius, might have been induced to see the religious motive in history in the same terms as Herodotus, Thucydides or Polybius. If he found nothing of the kind in his models, it would be most natural for him to regard theological meditation as nothing but a waste of time: this must have been what Procopius meant when he condemned Justinian for pondering the nature of God whilst ignoring much more important problems of military strategy, and thus jeopardising the outcome of the war.⁵³

Pagan historiography perhaps considerably influenced Procopius' attitude towards Christianity,⁵⁴ the role of which could obviously not be assimilated to that of the religion in Herodotus or Thucydides; and this is probably the reason for the position of Christianity in

⁵⁰ Cf. Maraval, *ad loc.*

⁵¹ The opposite tendency of the two works is here most evident.

⁵² The problem is perceptively dealt with in Av. Cameron, "The 'Scepticism' of Procopius", *op. cit.*

⁵³ *Anecd.*, 18, 29.

⁵⁴ The notion of Procopius as a sceptic or free-thinker has been quite widely held (beginning with the classic study by F. Dahn, *op. cit.*, 159–62 and *passim*; but cf. also, for example, O. Veh, "Zur Geschichtsschreibung und Weltauffassung des Prokop von Caesarea", II Teil, *Wiss. Beilage zur Jahresbericht 1951/2 des Gymnasium Christian-Ernestinum Bayreuth* [1951], 28).

Procopius. It is this aspect, despite such a position, which in the first instance recalls Agathias, the historian and poet of Myrina near Pergamon, who continued Procopius' history down to 558: the use by both historians of abstract terms such as *to kreitton* and *to theion* to indicate God, is an indication of their desire to synthesise paganism with Christianity.

Completely different from Procopius in temperament and interests, Agathias lived from the mid-530s to the early 580s. He studied at Alexandria and completed his training at Constantinople, where he practised as an advocate (*scholastikos*), though without great success, since his inclination was for literature: poetry in the first place (the lost *Daphniakà* was a collection of love-poems; the *Cyclos* was an anthology of epigrams divided according to subject into seven books). He turned to history in later life, but never abandoned literature; his *Histories* ("On the reign of Justinian"?) break off in 558 after only five books, but were undoubtedly planned as a much larger work.⁵⁵

As in the case of Procopius, it would be useless to enquire whether Agathias was a Christian or not, considering the official imperial line on religion, and the requirements of a public position such as Agathias' or Procopius'. More important would be to discover whether and to what extent he had understood and received the Christian message, and what relevance the presence in the empire of Christians and of the Church had assumed in his historical vision. Like Procopius, Agathias drew upon classical historiography, especially in its literary and rhetorical aspects; his training was essentially pagan, and he was determined to follow his chosen models in all respects affecting *mimesis* (lexis, style, dialect, chronological division by seasons, speeches, etc.).⁵⁶

To insert into such a well established tradition the new ideas of Christian spirituality was not easy, obviously, but one does not know how aware he was of the problem; Procopius, if we are right, seems not to have been very aware of it, for his vision was more concerned with matters of military strategy, frontiers, relations with the barbarians, in fine with the unity of the empire and how it was to

⁵⁵ For the dates of his life and works, see especially Av. Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford 1970), 1–12, 143–4 and *passim*, with bibliography.

⁵⁶ Aspects of this subject are discussed especially by G. Franke, "Quaestiones Agathianae", *Breslauer Philologische Abhandlungen* 47 (Trebnitz 1914) and by Av. Cameron, "Herodotus and Thucydides in Agathias", *Byzant. Zeitschr.* 57 (1964), 33–52 with bibliography.

be understood. He was concerned with such matters from the point of view of one who could be said to have lived them, at least in part, personally, as a participant. The same general subjects were treated by Agathias, although more from the point of view of a *scholastikos*, whose field of activity did not extend beyond the law-courts of Constantinople.

The difference in their points of view is naturally reflected more in the forms and terms which characterise their respective attitudes rather than in their subject matter: Procopius disgustedly condemns the unseemly wrangling of Christian sects; Agathias implies the vacuity, whilst asserting the futility, of disputes which regard matters beyond the reach of human reason.⁵⁷ Thus it was that the Persians (2, 10) failed in their expedition against the Greeks because it was “neither pious nor just”, and Xerxes was “arrogant and insolent”; the Athenian disaster in Sicily with Nicias and Demosthenes was due to *ànoia* and *adikia*; and Anatolius (5, 4), *àdikos es ta màlista*, perished in the earthquake at Byzantium in 542, thus suffering condign punishment.

But was the death of Anatolius really divine retribution, as the mob believed? In reality many of the just lost their lives, and many of the wicked were spared; can it really have been the wrath of God?⁵⁸ For God is *to agathòn* (e.g. 1, 1) and cannot be thought of as acting in such a way: a weighty theological problem—the origin of evil—is present here, and Agathias is evidently aware of it, as he is when he deals with the Manichaeans and the beliefs of the Persians (2, 24); he offers no solution, but considers such problems to be insoluble by man, as in the case of the death of Anatolius,⁵⁹ or regarding the cause of natural disasters such as the earthquake.⁶⁰

Although we do not find in Agathias the harsh expressions directed by Procopius against doctrinal disputes, we do receive a profound sense of their futility;⁶¹ on the other hand, the figure of Uranius discussing God, nature, essence, etc. (2, 29) may not be quite a parody of the behaviour of bishops assembled in synod, but how can

⁵⁷ 2, 15–16.

⁵⁸ 2, 10.

⁵⁹ 5, 4.

⁶⁰ 5, 10.

⁶¹ Some aspects of Agathias's thinking on Christianity are examined by S. Costanza, “Orientamenti cristiani della storiografia di Agazia”, *Helikon* 1–2 (1962), 90–111, as well as by Av. Cameron, *Agathias*, 89–111, with bibliography.

we be sure that the historian did not have something of the kind in mind when describing Uranius? In any case, if words like *physis*, *ousia*, *patheton* etc. are "much-abused terms", not all of the blame can be given to Uranius.

In fact, if he is induced to hazard an explanation of evil, as manifested in wars and slaughter, he does so by taking refuge in the safe harbour of the pagan tradition of Hellenistic origin. Rejecting the possibility of planetary influence or the intervention of fate,⁶² he makes men responsible for their greed and injustice:⁶³ the influence of Diodorus' proem (1, 1, 3)⁶⁴ is apparent. Agathias, like Procopius, is certainly Christian in his own fashion; but apart from his official position and the doctrinal utterances this might involve, he does seem to be dominated by pagan cultural matrices and by the instruments of rhetoric, both as a historian and as a poet (in his epigrams pagan themes are found together with Christian ones).⁶⁵

Christianity sometimes appears as a connotation of *Romanitas*: for example, the praise of the Franks (1, 2) is based on that fact that they possess laws and institutions equal to those of the Romans; among these is divine worship, and in fact they are Christians "of strictly orthodox faith". We sense here Agathias' political and historical perspective: a legitimisation of the empire, as in the words of the *strategòs* Martinus to the arrogant Nachoragan (3, 19) on the certainty the Romans' success deriving from the approbation of God. The presence of Christianity is probably to be understood in the same sense when the historian tells how the philosophers Damascius, Simplicius, Eulanius, Priscian, Hermias, Diogenes and Isidore (2, 30) take themselves off to Persia, dissatisfied with the doctrine prevailing in Rome, and convinced of finding better in Persia,⁶⁶ and then return disappointed to Rome (2, 31). Christianity thus appears as a feature of the Roman superiority to barbarism.

⁶² 1, 1.

⁶³ On the scepticism of Agathias, see for example J. Irmscher, "Über die Weltanschauung des Agathias. Methodische Vorfragen", *Studia patristica* IX (Berlin 1966), 63ff.

⁶⁴ The fullest collection of material and discussion is in H. Lieberich, *op. cit.*, 8-12.

⁶⁵ From a wide perspective the subject is dealt with by P. Waltz, "L'inspiration païenne et le sentiment chrétien dans les épigrammes funéraires du VI^e siècle", *L'Acropole* 6 (1931), 1ff.; for Agathias, see G. Viansino, *Agazia Scolastico: Epigrammi* (Milano 1967).

⁶⁶ 2, 30.

The part played by Christianity in Agathias' perspective sometimes has different political implications. The Alamanni, for example, are said (2, 1) to have sacked and destroyed Christian buildings, plundered sacred objects, committed savage massacres: divine punishment, sooner or later, is bound to catch up with them. Again it is a motif from pagan religiosity which forms the background to Agathias' interpretation (a motif which entered Christian thought, more or less on the basis of a *phthonos theôn*). It is the historian's observations immediately following which attract attention.

The destruction and sacking of Christian churches on the part of the Alamanni must necessarily remind the historian of the behaviour of Constantine towards pagan temples, something which caused a great stir, not only at the time, and which caused deep revulsion throughout the pagan world.⁶⁷ Agathias (1, 1; 2, 1) harshly condemns the Alamanni (whereas the Franks were as pious as the Romans), but it is not clear how for the same reason Constantine could escape blame, even implicitly, he being both the first Christian emperor and the one who shifted the focus of the empire eastwards. Of great importance is the notion formulated immediately afterwards, that is to say the justification of war in defence of one's country and one's own institutions, and the condemnation of those who, without any valid motive, invade the territory of others and wage war for no other reasons than greed and hatred, without having themselves suffered any harm.⁶⁸

It is easy to read into these words the statement of an ideal of non-violence, an anti-imperialist stance for the time, which is nevertheless in accordance with Christian spirituality; however Agathias' thinking is also revealed by these words if we take them as an historical judgement on the Constantinian presuppositions of Justinian's empire and on the ethical content of the same emperor's eastern policy. Agathias, like Procopius, is critical of this policy, for other

⁶⁷ In addition to the obviously approving passages in Christian authors (e.g. in the *Vita Constantini*, 3, 1, 54 and in the *Laus Constantini*, 8, 3–4) we might recall, for instance, the vigorous condemnations pronounced by the pagans, Julianus (*Or.*, 7, 228 b) and Libanius (*Or.*, 30, 6), and in a different context by the author of the *De rebus bellicis* (1–2).

⁶⁸ For some of these subjects see A. Pertusi, "L'atteggiamento spirituale sulla più antica storiografia bizantina", *Aevum* 30 (1956), 137–166 (especially 150–53); A.-A. Cameron, "Christianity and tradition in the historiography of the later Roman Empire", *Classical Quarterly* 14 (1964), 316–28 [lit.].

reasons as well, according to a line which apparently would carry to extreme consequences the choices of Constantine and their development under Theodosius; the empire is only the eastern *pars* in that case, and attempts at reconquest come to be seen as unjustified acts of war, all the more so as they are directed against peoples having a political and institutional dignity, as well as a religion, similar to those of the Romans.

This is the line taken by Procopius, but Agathias the historian has his own vision not lacking in logical consistency, quite a courageous one in some respects, despite his somewhat 'bourgeois' character and rather subdued tone; it should be remembered that he could not rely on the kind of official protection afforded to Procopius by Belisarius. Yet he is not afraid to take up his position, even a provocative one, as when he vindicates the merits and potential of the 'bourgeoisie'—a class he himself must have known well⁶⁹—, revealing a sensitivity towards social issues not evidenced by Procopius (unsurprisingly, given his origins), who in writing of the revolutionary Mazdakite movement—of rigorously communistic inspiration—he seizes on the least significant aspect, the community of wives, unpleasing to the very masses in whose favour Kavadh had conceived his reforms (*Bella*, 1, 5).⁷⁰

Agathias seems to have been proud of his direct use, via the translations made by his friend Sergius,⁷¹ of documentation in the Persian language⁷²: it was certainly an advance. However he suffers, not only from being the continuator of Procopius (for when the two historians are compared Agathias is inevitably the loser), but from the modest scale of his design (in so far as we can judge from an uncompleted work), and from his being dominated by his literary interests. If we are correct, however, they did not dominate him as much as has been thought.

⁶⁹ An aspect suitably illustrated by P. Lamma, *Ricerche sulla storia e la cultura del VI secolo* (Brescia 1950), then in *Oriente e occidente nell'alto medioevo* (Padova 1968), 83–160.

⁷⁰ This motif has been highlighted by S. Mazzarino, "Si può parlare di rivoluzione sociale nel mondo antico?", in *Il passaggio dall'antichità al medio evo in Occidente* (Spoleto 1962), 410–25, then in *Il basso impero. Antico, tardoantico ed era costantiniana* (Bari 1980) II, 431–45.

⁷¹ This subject has been studied especially by J. Suolahti, "On the Persian sources used by the Byzantine historian Agathias", *Studia Orientalia* 13 (1947).

⁷² 4. 30.

Menander the Guardsman, John of Epiphania, Theophanes of Byzantium

As the twin poles of pagan historiography between the 5th and 6th century, Procopius and Theophylact Simocatta mark the descending phase of a curve ending, with the historian of the emperor Maurice, in the triumph of mannerism, of rhetorical artifice, of scholastic practice. They have come down to us entire, the only authors of this period to do so. They probably indicate the extremes of an evolution of taste, one which it is impossible to follow on account of our lack of knowledge concerning the intermediate authors, which is modest in the case of Menander the Guardsman, and almost non-existent in the case of John and Theophanes. It was a taste which ensured that their histories came down to us, even though on account of very different and in some respects opposing characteristics.⁷³

Menander, John and Theophanes more or less cover the second half of the 6th century, and together with Agathias form an ideal link between Procopius and Theophylact, who wrote the history of the death of Tiberius II at the beginning of the reign of Phocas, or in other words dealt with the reign of Maurice (582–602); he is therefore a continuator of Menander (who covered the period 558–582), and may be said also to be a continuator of Theophanes, who from 566 reached as far as 581, making ample use of John of Epiphania, apparently (Müller, FHG, IV, p. 272, even calls him an excerptor). John's history reached as far as 593, having begun with the time of Justinian, probably where Agathias broke off.

Menander explicitly states that he is the continuator of Agathias (fr. 1); in an ideal sense John of Epiphania is as well (1, 1), even though he does not look back much further than 571–2 in setting the scene for the events he is to narrate, that is to say the beginnings of the twenty-year war between Justin II and Chosroes I, which ended in the ninth year of Maurice's reign. This means that there is a thirteen-year gap between Agathias' history and that of John. So an ideal sense is what Evagrius Scholasticus (*H.E.*, 5, 24) must have been thinking of when he calls both Agathias and John (his fellow citizen) continuators of Procopius. The church historian ignores Menander, who really was the continuator of Agathias. There is

⁷³ For an account of the problem see Mich. Whitby, *The Historiae of Theophylactus Simocatta*, D.Phil. dissertation (Oxford 1981).

indeed no evidence that Evagrius made use of Menander; he was in any case writing in the twelfth year of Maurice's reign, when to regard Menander as the continuator of Agathias might have meant alluding to his autobiographical piece (fr. 1): this piece reflects a human episode not unknown to the emperor, possibly with some satisfaction, in the midst of commonplaces where it is not impossible to detect traces of caricature.

How should we understand his statement of the motives which led him to become an historian? It was not so much the values of history or the need to preserve facts from oblivion and to render a service to posterity—the traditional motives adduced by the historian—but a much more modest desire, that is to say, put simply, the desire to profit from the rewards offered by the emperor, who was keen to promote literature and the life of the mind, being himself an assiduous cultivator of poetry and history.⁷⁴ Menander's intention of swimming against the current is evident, if we compare his proem with the solemn announcement in the proem of Agathias, who however also declares his intention of continuing the narrative interrupted by the author's death, emphasising to some extent the contrast.⁷⁵

We notice also a certain sense of satisfaction at the frustrations experienced by himself and his brother, both of them jurists, he discontented and his brother an utter failure; giving himself up to a dissolute life and being "saved" by the emperor are elements in the picture Menander wishes to paint of himself, as a man somewhat free of traditional categories. We have the impression that he was closely attached to the emperor Maurice; his title of *protector*, with its privileges both honorific and material, is an obvious clue, and so too is his probable use of archival material, since access to such documents was not granted to everyone. That Menander's *History* (Ἱστορία or Τὸ μετ' Ἀγαθίου) was directly inspired by the emperor, or even commissioned by him, cannot be asserted with certainty; but there does seem to be a definite connection between the financial incentives proffered by Maurice in order to stimulate the laziest minds and Menander's decision to compose a *syngraphé*. If so, he would

⁷⁴ Fr. 1, 1 (ed. Blockley, as for all subsequent citations from Menander).

⁷⁵ Fr. 1, 20–5.

seem to have struck an auto-ironic and humorous note in including himself, by implication, among the very idle.⁷⁶

Yet Maurice is not the protagonist of Menander's *History*, in fact he does not even figure in it as a ruler, because the *History* begins in 557–8 (the end of Agathias' *History*) and goes up to 582, if we suppose that the fall of Sirmium was the last event narrated by Menander,⁷⁷ in other words the first year of Maurice's reign. But the author's attitude to the future emperor is very clear from the few references remaining in the Constantinian *Excerpta*, and in some entries in the *Suidas*; the marked difference between Maurice and the 'generals' who preceded him is emphasised in fr. 23, 3 and 23, 4 (regarding the art of digging trenches and the treatment of subject peoples, respectively). In Maurice's behaviour Menander discerns the basis of his ascent of the throne (explicitly in the first case).⁷⁸

The negotiations between Bingane, on the Persian side, and Maurice, commander of the Roman armies on the Persian front, are treated so as to emphasise the moral qualities of the two leaders: the former refuses to give in to blandishments and allurements, and rejects the request to hand over the fortress of Chlomaron to the enemy; the latter continues to besiege the fortress despite the rich gifts sent by the Persian (fr. 23, 7): he had not come to hoard up sacred objects, or to make war on Christ, but to make war with the help of Christ, and to free his co-religionists from the Persians who did not follow the true faith.⁷⁹ It is an encounter of noble sentiments which, in the perspective of the historian, tends to exalt the Romans in the context of a culture which clearly distinguishes the Persian barbarians from other barbarians, attributing to them a dignity almost equal to that of the Romans.

Whether or not it is true that the capture of 800 white horses by Azarephthes involved no responsibility on the part of Maurice (fr.

⁷⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁷ Theophylact Simocatta, 1, 3, 5; that the fall of Sirmium was the last event is very probable, but not certain, and there may be some truth in the suggestion made by B. Baldwin, "Menander Protector", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 32 (1978), 101–25, especially 106, that the history went on to deal with Maurice; the classical models, after all, wrote mainly contemporary history (we are thinking in particular of Thucydides) and it was they who inspired Procopius, and probably also John of Epiphania and Theophanes of Byzantium; we cannot say anything about Agathias because he died before completing his history.

⁷⁸ Fr. 23, 3.

⁷⁹ Fr. 23, 7.

23, 11) cannot be said with certainty: the suspicion arises, however, of a principled defence of the failure of a carefully designed plan on account of lack of discipline and the arrogance of subordinates, probably when the Romans were defeated at the battle of Sirak in 580.⁸⁰ A judgement such as the one expressed at fr. 23, 2—if it is indeed by Menander, as seems likely⁸¹—is made of the future emperor rather than the military commander: little versed in the arts of war, he was nevertheless wise, serious and acute, uniting opposite qualities in his own person, etc.⁸²

Menander's judgement on Maurice seems, then, a judgement on the emperor rather than on the commander, or man of arms; and the emperor appears to be present, even though Menander's *History* comes to an end when he ascends the throne, as a point of reference in the perspective of his predecessors Justin II (565–78) and Tiberius (578–82). The problem was always the same one, involving Justinian's desire to re-establish the unity of the empire; it was the same problem which made Procopius so critical of the emperor, who conducted a weak policy of concessions and appeasement in the east, while taking a strong line in the west. Agathias too was aware of the problem, as we have seen, and Menander was unambiguous in his attitude to Justinian's policies, despite appearances; it is undoubtedly a positive attitude, at least as far as we are able to tell from his surviving writings, regarding a policy which seems the natural outcome of Justinian's use of force against the Vandal Gelimer and the Goth Vittiger.

Then he was young and vigorous, now he is old and feeble, but the result would have been the same, in that he would have obtained it not by war but by intelligent and sagacious conduct, if only he had not died before his time (fr. 5, 1).⁸³ Even more explicit is Menander's favourable view of Justinian's policies, when he recalls the approval of the sacred *xyllogos* and emphasises the advantages of the alliance with the Avars, even if it carried a heavy price (fr. 5, 2):⁸⁴ it was a wise resolution in any case, according to Menander, in case of battle being joined with common enemies, because if the Avars

⁸⁰ Fr. 23, 11. On the identification of this episode cf. R.C. Blockley, *The History of Menander the Guardsman* (Liverpool 1985), 283.

⁸¹ Cf. Blockley, *op. cit.*, 282, n. 274.

⁸² Fr. 32, 2.

⁸³ Fr. 5, 1.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

were victorious it was a victory of the allies, and if they were defeated the Romans would be free of an inconvenient and arrogant ally.⁸⁵

This reading of Menander's thinking might seem to be contradicted by the allusion to Justinian's policies one detects, in connection with his successor Justin II (fr. 8), in the importance he attributes to the *rhathymia* of the Romans, to which the Avars allude somewhat provocatively; but it is not so, as it might appear, for the same behaviour praised by Menander in the fragments cited could be interpreted negatively as inertia and laxness, or positively as wisdom and prudence.⁸⁶ Justin's different approach, which was energetic and unwilling to make concessions, certainly altered Roman policy, but the author's intention seems to be not so much to emphasise Justin's reaction to the earlier policies but rather to exalt continuity, to be understood as the expression of a natural cycle, the young Justin recalling the young Justinian.⁸⁷

Menander's interpretation follows, therefore, a consistent path, in general, and in such terms, probably, we should understand his position regarding the intransigent and in some respects menacing attitude of Justin, or of whoever acted on his behalf, towards both the Avars (fr. 8) and the Persians (fr. 9): in fact, one cannot detect an overall contrast between the policies of Justinian and those of Justin as long as the former made use of *rhathymia* in place of the policies of war. Menander does not seem to show any kind of reservation regarding the aggressive policies of Justin, not even, it seems to me, when it came to breaking the fifty-year peace with the Persians, stipulated in 561 (fr. 13, 5; 16, 1).⁸⁸ The remarks on the limits of a "bought" peace and on the characteristics of a true friendship (fr. 16) are highly significant;⁸⁹ such arguments do not, certainly, constitute a negative note; they may be merely the echo of Procopius' condemnation of Justinian's concessionary policy away from the western fronts. It was the policy of the old Justinian, but it could not

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ For an absolutely positive usage, cf. for example Thuc., 2, 39, 4 (and Thucydides was a model, as is well known).

⁸⁷ I do not share the opinion of Blockley (*op. cit.*, 261, n. 92), who sees an explicit criticism of Justinian's policy "of buying peace".

⁸⁸ We cannot be certain that Menander did not have some reservations about the methods (e.g. ὑπερόρια εἶπων), which did not affect the rightness of the emperor's decision; his attitude towards the Avars was no different (e.g. fr. 8). Blockley thinks otherwise, *op. cit.*, 23; cf. Baldwin, *op. cit.*, 112.

⁸⁹ Fr. 16.

be that of the young Justin, according to what seems to be Menander's thinking, especially in relation to the payment of 30,000 pieces of gold agreed in 561, an onerous as well as humiliating levy: ideally, with the roles reversed, it is now Chosroes who plays the part of Justinian, given that he is now old, unwilling to wage war, and concerned only to leave a peaceful empire to his sons (fr. 16, 1).⁹⁰

Again: Menander's positive judgement on Tiberius—who succeeded Justin II from 578, but had been Caesar since the end of 574, and therefore almost immediately at the head of the empire when Justin went mad—must be highly significant, especially when we recall that it is a judgement largely endorsed by tradition;⁹¹ in any case we are able to discern continuity in the thinking of the historian: the recurrence and alternation of aggression and tolerance seem to belong to the biological cycle which in passing from youth to old age parallels the policies of Justinian and Chosroes (Justin's madness is a variation on this theme). Intransigence and tolerance characterise different moments in the policy of Tiberius, such as in the case of the opposition to the onerous payment of the gold *nomismata*, and the handing over of the Christian rebels of Persarmenia, on one hand, or the search for the conditions for a lasting peace, on the other, just as in the alternation between youth and old age.

If hypotheses such as the division of areas of influence are accepted,⁹² if only implicitly, by the historian, they undoubtedly influence a moment of mature reflection on determining factors of political reality: a reversal, in effect, of the more radical evaluations expressed by Procopius and by Agathias, possibly the natural outcome of that alternation of aggression with tolerance. But probably the reality did not escape Menander, and peace, which the two parties often appeared to be seeking, becomes chiefly an instrument for affirming or not losing a position of dominance; thus the Romans are thinking only of war (fr. 18, 4) when they conclude a three-year peace so as to have time to make their preparations to fight the Persians (who contemptuously suppose that the Romans will not succeed even if they have more time to prepare).⁹³ The Persians, for their part, about

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10–15.

⁹¹ Cf., for example, Bury, *History*, I, 79ff.

⁹² Menander uses the term ἰσοτιμία (fr. 20, 2); similar terminology is used by Theophylact (3, 17, 2; V, 12, 2), cited by Bockley, *op. cit.*, 25.

⁹³ Fr. 18, 4.

three years later, accept that the inhabitants of Persamenia and Iberia be guaranteed freedom of movement, when Byzantium cedes the two regions to them, only because they know they are losing almost nothing, and that apart from the fugitive Christian rebels nobody will leave their lands (fr. 22, 2).⁹⁴

So Menander's point of view seems to be a late-6th-century one, conditioned by twenty years of the reign of Maurice, whose ideal presence—as we have seen—is all the more significant in that he does not feature in the narrative. The 6th century is certainly the Age of Justinian, and not only on account of his almost forty years' reign; there seem to be two characteristic notes in the perspective of the historian who is writing in the period of Maurice: the peace with Persia, solid—as appeared—and advantageous to the empire, on the one hand, and “testament” by which the emperor established the division of the empire amongst his sons, on the other. The peace could be seen as the conclusion of a long period of alternating fortunes, but above all it was the pendant to the fifty-year peace concluded by Justinian in 561, requested now by the king of Persia, Chosroes II, constrained by the force and prestige of the rebel Bahram, conqueror of the Turks (the letter of Chosroes is in Theophylact Simocatta, 4, 11, if anything authentic survives amidst the welter of rhetoric).

The “testament”—once again it is Theophylact (8, 11, 8–10) who tells us about it—envisaged in substance a division of the empire into *partes*, an eastern *pars* ruled by the eldest son Theodosius and with its capital at Constantinople, and a western *pars* with its capital at Rome, governed by Tiberius (further fractions of the imperial dominion were to be entrusted to other sons, under the tutelage of Domentianus). A universalist vision would seem to have been the basis for the division, and in this sense the point of reference was Justinian's great decision; but it is easy to imagine that the inspiration for it (in the fifteenth year of Maurice's reign) goes along way further back, to the time of Theodosius in the late 4th century.

Menander's point of view seems an essentially positive one regarding imperial history from the last seven years of Justinian until the end of the reign of Tiberius; this is very likely, even though we read his history in extracts and therefore we may be missing significant

⁹⁴ This is the opinion of Menander (fr. 20, 2).

aspects of his thinking which would not of course have escaped Procopius and Agathias. It is however a judgement apparently founded on the peace Maurice concluded with the Persians, the positive conclusion to a long story which, without the opportunity for a lasting peace, had little to recommend it (e.g. the policies of Tiberius). It is easy to grasp the crucial role played by the peace negotiations of 561, in Menander's vision, and thus why they take up so much space in his account (fr. 6).⁹⁵ On the other hand, the same judgement is founded on the *partes* of Maurice, which are the culmination of two centuries' development beginning with Theodosius; in them we can discern a sense, again as in a cycle, of the alternation of aggression and tolerance, of youth and old age.⁹⁶

The central point in the narrative of John of Epiphania—secretary to Gregory, the patriarch of Antioch—is the flight of Chosroes II into the arms of Maurice, and his restoration to the throne by the same emperor, in 591, followed by a peace favourable to the Romans; the extract which has come down to us (*Cod. Vat.* 1056) deals with the violation of the peace of many decades and the resulting reciprocal accusations. The bad faith of the Persians when they sign a treaty or promise anything is almost a commonplace;⁹⁷ but there is also the evident condemnation of Justinian's eastern policies, when the extension of the peace is blamed for the decline in military organisation and the fading of the warlike spirit.⁹⁸

John seems to follow Procopius' line, more or less; it is not possible to verify whether or not this shared point of view appears at other points, but of significance is his judgement on Justin when the emperor confers the title of Caesar on Tiberius, "the best thing he did in his whole reign";⁹⁹ his judgement on Tiberius II is therefore enthusiastic: σωτήριον βουλευθέν, πλεῖστον αἴτιον ἀγαθῶν τοῖς Ῥωμαίων γέγονε πράγμασι. However, these opinions of his are shared by Evagrius (*H.E.*, 5, 1) and by Gregory of Tours (4, 40) as regards

⁹⁵ Cf. for example Bockley, *op. cit.*, 17.

⁹⁶ For various relevant aspects concerning the emperor Maurice, see for example P. Goubert, *Byzance avant l'Islam, I, Byzance et l'Orient sous les successeurs de Justinien. L'empereur Maurice* (Paris 1951); and especially Mich. Whitby, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

⁹⁷ There are specific references, for example, in chapters 2 and 4.

⁹⁸ The operation conducted by Adarmanes is cited as a result of such an attitude, cf. ch. 4.

⁹⁹ However the policies of Tiberius—of opposite tendency, evidently—envisaged the treaty with Chosroes; cf. ch. 5.

the condemnation of Justin, and by Evagrius (*H.E.*, 5, 22) and by Paul the Deacon (3, 15) as regards the eulogy of Tiberius; this means it is impossible to arrive at the distinctive features of this thought, even in its essential aspects, just as in the case of Theophylact Simocatta, who made use of him, although we do not know how or to what extent.¹⁰⁰

Not much is to be learned from the fact that in the passage by John of Epiphania there is information on some subjects also treated in the even shorter passage by Theophanes of Byzantium (Photius, *Bibl. cod.* 64); he covered in ten books a period of one decade of the Persian wars, beginning with 566–7, and probably reached further, as we have seen (even though the mention of other books, in addition to the ten, seems to refer to a text on Justinian, recorded as being by the same author).

The principal subjects are the Persian expedition against the Omeritae, tributaries of the Romans; the embassy of Zemarchus to the Turks on behalf of Justin II; the revolt of the Armenian tributaries of the Persians against Surena; the fall into disgrace of Marcian and its consequences. To restrict ourselves to a single example, the revolt of the Armenians—effectively supported by the Romans—was seen by the Persians as involving Roman responsibility for the breaking of the treaty, according to John of Epiphania's version; the same episode, according to Theophanes of Byzantium, was the decisive cause of the breaking of the treaty, although his interpretation is more obviously from the Roman point of view.

John's position on this matter would seem to be the more objective; he, moreover, does not fail to attribute responsibility to the Romans in another context, Justin's refusal to pay the Persians the annual sums agreed under the terms of the treaty, which made Rome Πέρσαις ὑπόφορον ἐς αἰί.¹⁰¹ Another example: the reason Justin removed Marcian from command, according to John, was the accusation that he had deliberately conducted the action badly, which contrasts with the picture earlier given of him as a man well supplied with qualities and with warlike and human virtues.¹⁰² For Theophanes, the

¹⁰⁰ M. Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice, op. cit., passim*.

¹⁰¹ There are pertinent observations in H. Turtledove, "Justin II's Observance of Justinian's Persian Treaty of 562", *Byzant. Zeitschrift* 76 (1981), 293–301.

¹⁰² Chs. 3 and 4; the contrast, in the last analysis, is resolved in a negative view of the emperor, incapable of rightly evaluating facts, people and circumstances.

cause of Marcian's dismissal was his attempt to seize supreme power: Justin seems in both authors to be a man of somewhat hasty decisions and easily influenced, although in Theophanes no real contradiction emerges, and the accusation is graver. So it appears that Theophanes' position is pro-imperial, whereas John's is possibly more objective.¹⁰³

If this be so—for every conclusion must be highly uncertain, in view of the paucity of available material—we discern in Theophanes the lineaments of a court historian to Justin,¹⁰⁴ and in John, on the other hand, a critic of Justinian along the lines of Procopius, and a critic of Justin II, if we have correctly understood his thinking in relation to Theophanes, but above all, if the best thing the emperor did was the elevation of Tiberius; for this reason perhaps even John was a court historian, but of Tiberius and Maurice (this is only a supposition, because there is no mention of them, at least not in the extract).¹⁰⁵

Ancient History: Petros Patricius and the Anonymus post Dionem

The historians of whom we have been speaking were writing contemporary history, even if the requirements of narrative or lacunae to be filled may have induced them to go back in time, even a great many decades back; we recall, for example, Procopius' account of events on the eastern front in relation to contemporary history. From this line, which essentially derives from the models of classical historiography, Petros Patricius diverges completely. He was more of less a contemporary of Procopius, but he wrote ancient history; the

¹⁰³ A symptomatic aspect is that relating to religious policy, on which see for example the remarks of Av. Cameron, "The Early Religious Policies of Justin II", in Eadem, *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (London 1981), 51–67.

¹⁰⁴ Certainly of great interest is the information he gives us regarding the raising of silk-worms, which he learned about in Byzantium from a Persian who had been to China; the information, as presented in Photius' extract, seems to be the pretext for a very brief excursus on commercial relations with the Chinese and on the success of Justin II's policy towards the Turks (even though the consequence was, practically, the enslavement of the Ethiopians, his allies); full details in, for example, Stein, *Hist. B.E.*, 769–773 and 843–845.

¹⁰⁵ For the tendencies in imperial policy during this period, still useful is the treatment by E. Stein, *Studien zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Reiche, vornehmlich Kaisern Justinus II und Tiberius Constantinus* (Stuttgart 1919).

difference is significant, because the rhythms of their lives and their constant involvement in politics might lead us to suppose a certain similarity of temperament. But their personalities and interests were really quite different, and expressed themselves in the different choice of subject. In any case, Petros Patricius' choice must have seemed an unfashionable one, as Johannes Lydus did not fail to emphasise.¹⁰⁶

Born in Thessalonica,¹⁰⁷ but *Illyrikòs*¹⁰⁸ because Macedonia was at that time under the jurisdiction of the *praefectus praetorii* of Illyricum, at the very beginning of the century, he was given a number of prestigious appointments as ambassador (in 534 to Amalasunta, in 552 to Pope Vigilius for the question of the 'Three Chapters', in 562 to King Chosroes of Persia for the peace treaty), and in 538 he was appointed *magister officiorum*; he wrote *Histories* and a treatise on the ordering of the State (Περὶ πολιτικῆς καταστάσεως), the subject of which was essentially connected with the post of *magister officiorum*, with its history and the relative documentation. Of this last work there remains what is contained in chapters 84 and 85 of Book I of the *De caerimoniis* of Constantine Porphyrogenetos, but chapters 84–95 constitute a unified whole, so that all of them are probably covered by the phrase ἐκ τῶν τοῦ μαγίστρου Πέτρου, said explicitly only of the first two.¹⁰⁹

The dating of this text is fully compatible with the details of Petros' life, because the text reflects a period in which Theodora was already dead and Justinian was still alive (390, 9; 391, 17), and is therefore to be dated between 548 and 565;¹¹⁰ this dating is of decisive help as regards the problem of a possible identification of this work with a text called Περὶ πολιτικῆς of which a very short summary is provided by Photius (*Bibl. Cod.* 37), and of which there survive two extensive passages in a Vatican palimpsest (see below).¹¹¹ What seems

¹⁰⁶ *De mag.* 2, 26.

¹⁰⁷ For information on the life of Petros Patricius see A. Nagl in *RE*, XXXVIII Hb. (1938), 1296–1304, s.v. *Petros* 6.

¹⁰⁸ Documentation in V. Grecu, "Die Abstammung des Historikers Petros Patricius", *Byzant. Zeitschrift* 40 (1940), 448.

¹⁰⁹ This theory was proposed by Reiske, and in general was favourably received; it was rejected however by Wäschke, *Über das von Reiske vermutete Fragment der Exzerpte Konstantins Περὶ ἀναγορεύσεως* (Dessau 1878).

¹¹⁰ Cf. J.B. Bury, "The Ceremonial Book of Constantine Porphyrogenetos", *The English Historical Review* 86 (1907), 209–227 (especially 212–213).

¹¹¹ See however E. Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium. From Justin I to the last Paleologus* (Oxford 1957), 63–75.

certain is that the work used by Constantine Porphyrogenetos was predominantly an antiquarian study dealing especially with ceremonies and institutions which by that time had changed or disappeared altogether, connected with circumstances and facts that no longer existed. From the little that remains it is impossible to say what the author's intention was, apart from pure erudition; however it would seem natural to place Petros' work in an imperial context, as one intended to recreate, on the political and institutional level, the magnificence of the past; in fact nothing is more obvious, considering that he was an important public functionary with specific duties.

Angelo Mai proposed identifying this text—presumably the *Περὶ πολιτικῆς καταστάσεως* by Petros mentioned in the *Suidas*¹¹²—with two ample fragments (belonging to Books IV and V) of a work called *Περὶ πολιτικῆς ἐπιστήμης*, which he had discovered in a Vatican palimpsest and published in 1827.¹¹³ This is why this dialogue between the patrician Menas and the referendary Thomas is worthy of consideration here; but for no other reason, given that there seems in fact to be nothing in common with Petros' work of that title (*κατάστασις* is after all very different from *ἐπιστήμη*) except for 1, 84–95 of *De caerimoniis*, of which we have spoken. The content of the dialogue between Menas and Thomas (Menodorus and Thomasios in the palimpsest) can be found, even though in few words, in the extract cited by Photius; in six books a new¹¹⁴ doctrine of the State is proposed, breaking with the thinking of the ancients, or rather a political system called “dicearchic”: in opposition to Plato, as the author supposes, but in reality a mixed constitution.¹¹⁵

There is some analogy (in addition to the basic similarity of the interlocutors' names) with the contents, as far as one can gather them, of the palimpsest, that is to say the problems of military organisation in Book IV, and of political science in Book V, even though

¹¹² 2, 1406.

¹¹³ *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio*, II (Roma 1827), 571–609.

¹¹⁴ At least it is presented as new, though what it is about it that is novel escapes us (especially if we think of Polybius, on whom see for example Ch. Schubert, “Mischverfassung und Gleichgewichtssystem. Polybios und seine Vorläufer”, in *Rom und der Griechische Osten. Festschr. f. H.H. Schmitt* [Stuttgart 1995], 225–35; and A. Lintott, “The theory of the mixed constitution in Rome”, in J. Barnes and M. Griffin eds. *Philosophia togata II. Plato and Aristotle at Rome* [Oxford 1997], 70–85).

¹¹⁵ There is a full treatment of this subject especially in G.J.D. Aalders, *Die Theorie der gemischten Verfassung im Altertum* (Amsterdam 1968), 72–74 and *passim*.

there is no explicit trace of the *dikaiarchikòn* or of the mixed constitution;¹¹⁶ where any doubt remains—given that so little of the dialogue survives, perhaps only one tenth of it—that the lost portion dealt with subjects such as the *κατάστασις* of Petros (which is not utterly impossible), the question is settled by the dialogue's probable dating.¹¹⁷ It is in fact very unlikely to belong to the second part of Justinian's reign, after the death of Theodora (that it does belong to Justinian's reign had already been realised by Mai), unlike Petros' text, which as we have seen dates from 548–65; and in fact clues have been found in favour of a *terminus a quo* of, shall we say, 535—when Belisarius' victory over the Vandals with 5000 horse would have rendered somewhat precarious the affirmation of the supremacy of the infantry, which is one of the dialogue's main themes—or even 532, the year of the 'Nika' revolt (the imperative of *νικάω*).¹¹⁸

There can in any case be no doubt regarding the *terminus ad quem*: it is sufficient to consider the name of the Persian king Peroz¹¹⁹ (457–84), son of Yazdegerd II; the victory of Belisarius' cavalry in 535 is presented by Procopius as an incredible, almost miraculous event,¹²⁰ such as to subvert any rational expectations: can it be by chance that the anonymous author uses the same terms that Procopius applies to Belisarius' victory in 535—*tyche* and *logos*, in fact—when he alludes to the exceptional features of the decisive role played by the infantry (4, 48–9)? A fact such as this might well suggest reflections, such as those of Menodorus in the dialogue, on the neglect of the infantry, on the resultant weakening of the State, and on the need for reorganisation: the author seems to be saying that miracles can only happen once.

The author may have known about this, or he may not; but we may wonder what he was thinking of when he asserted, regarding

¹¹⁶ For an interpretation of the thought expressed in the anonymous dialogue in relation to the *Peri politikês* mentioned by Photius, see especially A. Fotiou, "Dicearchus and the mixed constitution in sixth-century Byzantium. New evidence from a treatise on 'political science'", *Byzantion* 5 (1981), 533–547.

¹¹⁷ A. Pertusi agrees with Mai in his "I principi fondamentali della concezione del potere a Bisanzio", *Bollettino dell'Istituto storico Italiano per il Medioevo e Archivio Muratoriano* 80 (1968) 1–23.

¹¹⁸ Cf. for example C.M. Mazzucchi, "Per una rilettura del palinsesto vaticano contenente il dialogo 'Sulla scienza politica' del tempo di Giustiniano" in G. Archi (ed.), *L'imperatore Giustiniano, op. cit.*, 237–247.

¹¹⁹ W. Ensslin, *R.E.*, XXXVII Hb. 887–889, s.v. *Peroz*.

¹²⁰ *Bella*, 2, 25.

the pre-eminence and use of the infantry, that it was unnecessary to say anything about the Persians, because it was apparent to all.¹²¹ He must have been referring to some victory of the Persians over the Romans, in which the superiority of the infantry over cavalry was evident: this might have been the encounter between Persians and Romans described by Procopius,¹²² when 4,000 Persians emerging from the fortress of Doubios easily managed to defeat a Roman army that was much larger but disorganised and including cavalry, on which alone they were counting.¹²³

This encounter took place in 543, and is not of slight importance—as might at first seem—since Procopius could affirm (2, 25, 33) that it was a disaster like none other; now, if the anonymous author really was thinking of this episode (it seems unlikely that all its features should occur again), the *terminus ad quem* would be 543, which would give a more precise chronological framework: since the event was ‘under the eyes of everyone’ when the author was writing (ὀφθαλμοῖς ὁρώμεν), it cannot have been far from 543.

This confirms what almost all scholars acknowledge, that is to say that the dialogue of the Vatican palimpsest is not the work of Petros Patricius;¹²⁴ it is therefore superfluous to dwell on other aspects, such as scarce compatibility between a Petros Patricius who was an important functionary loyal to the imperial family, as everything leads us to suppose, and the anonymous author, in a number of respects.¹²⁵ We do not know whether any trace of theoretical reflection on history or politics was present in his Ἱστορίαι, of which only eighteen fragments survive, thanks to Constantine Porphyrogenetos and his *excerpta de legationibus*¹²⁶ and *de sententiis*;¹²⁷ the only exception is the first fragment consisting of two citations in the *Lexikon Seguerianum*,¹²⁸ Πέτρου εἰς τὰ περὶ Ἀντονίου and Πέτρου εἰς τὰ τῆς μοναρχίας Καίσαρος.

The *Histories*, therefore, probably covered the period from the sec-

¹²¹ 5, 41–2.

¹²² *Bella*, 2, 25.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 2, 25, 31–35.

¹²⁴ Valdenberg implicitly accepted Mai's identification, in “Les idées politiques dans les fragments attribués à Pierre le Patrice”, *Byzantion* 2 (1925) 55–76.

¹²⁵ Mazzucchi proposes identifying one of the two interlocutors as the author, *op. cit.*, 246–247.

¹²⁶ Ed. C. De Boor (Berolini 1903).

¹²⁷ Ed. U.P. Boissevain (Berolini 1906).

¹²⁸ *Peri syntaxeos*, *Cod. Coislianus Anecd.* Bekker, I, 149, 130.

ond triumvirate until the Gallic campaigns of Julian the Apostate, Caesar to Constantius II. Interest in ancient history, which was a feature of *Περὶ πολιτικῆς καταστάσεως*, is also fully manifested in the *Histories*, evidently; Petros' choice is not due solely to the fact that history from Julian the Apostate onwards was treated fully, whereas Eunapius, and thus Zosimus, had expounded the events of the last eighty-five years somewhat summarily: for the earlier history of the empire he had to go back to sources almost 300 years earlier, among the Greek authors, in order to have more detailed information.

In fact, Petros seems to have had more natural sympathy with the earlier material, as appears from the fragments of the *Histories*, all except the first of which deal with subjects in some fashion connected to ancient embassies, and for this reason the object of Constantine's *Excerpta*; this is a subject which does not leave much scope for those who would seek to discover the outlines of his thinking and the range of his historical vision, even though there is nothing to suggest that the whole work was restricted to subjects of a documentary nature. But there is more: the exposition of this subject often reproduces, almost *ad verbum*, the text of Cassius Dio (e.g. in fragments 1, 2, 5, 7), and it may be that the *Histories* of Petros are *nihil aliud quam Dionis breviarium*, as Niebuhr thought.

We have to ask then what sort of historian Petros was, if his exposition was for the most part limited to antiquarian documentation, and if even this was prevalently nothing but an almost literal reproduction of other sources; that he was certainly not a great historian, but that he was a good politician and an able diplomat, one knows and one easily intuits. Yet he attracted high praise, during his lifetime, which is perhaps not explained if we interpret in these terms his personality in its essential lineaments: while much of the praise may have referred to his political or forensic activity,¹²⁹ in his work as a historian we must find the significant factors in the judgement of those who exalted his teaching, as well as his rhetorical art, including Chosroes.¹³⁰

It is therefore likely that the single-tendency selections of Constantine Porphyrogennetos and of Menander the Guardsman have in some fashion penalised the historian Petros; the subject he dealt with, the

¹²⁹ E.g. Menander, fr. 11 and 15; Suidas, s.v.; *vir eloquentissimus, . . . disertissimus*, Cassiod., *Var.*, 10, 19, 23ff.; etc.

¹³⁰ Menander, fr. 11.

interests he cultivated and the attitudes he manifested in his vision of history must have ranged much further than the bare antiquarian documentation presented in the surviving fragments. It is true that Johannes Lydus was his client, but one cannot believe that he was making everything up when¹³¹ he spoke of a "sound master of universal history", and of the matter he dealt with as *kataskeuê* and *exousia* of political events, as well as embassies, arms, etc.; in such a thematic perspective, room might be found for various subjects, from the army to State doctrine, even though with regard to the Vatican palimpsest there are other difficulties, as we have seen.

There again, Menander the Guardsman—later—cites a *synagogê* of Petros relating to the diplomatic negotiations of 562 between the author himself and the king of Persia, and uses it fully in his exposition;¹³² it was a work of a certain size and of great documentary precision, as appears,¹³³ fully reproducing all the discussions and the attitudes manifested during the lengthy negotiations. There is no other mention of this *syngraphê* of Petros; to find an allusion to it, we probably have to resort once again to Joannes Lydus (*loc. cit.*) and his mention of the embassies in which he had taken part. If so, his interest as a historian would assume a wider perspective: however the principal characteristic would still be the institutional, antiquarian one, possibly also in its theoretical aspects (he devoted sleepless nights to philosophical speculation [Joannes Lydus, *loc. cit.*]).

The wide range, as we may presume, of the historical vision of Petros Patricius would assume more definite lineaments if he were indeed the so-called *Anonymus post Dionem*, that is to say if he were the author of the *excerpta* which in the Vatican palimpsest closely follow Cassius Dio, down to the time of Constantine the Great (whereas it is known that Cassius Dio's history ends with 229, the eighth year of Severus Alexander). But it is a hypothesis which—although authoritative, going back to Niebuhr¹³⁴—causes some perplexity; Angelo Mai had thought of John of Antioch, author of a universal chronicle, surviving for the most part in Constantine's *excerpta*, composed after 610, which runs from Adam to the beginning of Heraclius' reign. But the very notion of a universal chronicle seems hardly compatible

¹³¹ *De magistr.*, 2, 25ff.

¹³² Fr. 11 (especially), but also 12, 13, 15.

¹³³ Fr. 12.

¹³⁴ In *CSHB* I (1829), XXIV-XXV.

with the fullness of information which the fragments by the anonymous author lead us to expect, to say nothing of the source he uses for the period from Commodus to Gordian, a different source from the Herodian used by John of Antioch.

These objections are some of those advanced by Müller;¹³⁵ he also produced objections to Niebuhr's hypothesis of Petros Patricius' authorship,¹³⁶ which was also contested, in more recent times, by Mazzarino, who emphasised the contrast between Petros Patricius' version and that of the anonymous author regarding the fate of Valerian after his encounter with the king of Persia, Shapur.¹³⁷ Petros gives the version in which Valerian is captured by deceit,¹³⁸ whereas the anonymous author has the emperor being taken in battle (at least indirectly, if this is how the absence of Macrinus/Macrianus from the field of battle is to be interpreted).¹³⁹ According to Mazzarino this is a total contradiction, sufficient to render inadmissible the identification of the anonymous author with Petros Patricius; but in fact the assimilation of the former to the version of Valerian δορυάλωτος is not so simple and obvious, given that the 'invitation' to Macrianus, from the Persian king, to visit Valerian is presented as a trick. In practice, something similar had happened in Valerian's own case: he too had been 'invited' by the king of Persia,¹⁴⁰ he had fallen into the trap and had been taken prisoner by Shapur, whereas Macrianus, with Valerian's unfortunate experience to guide him, was more prudent (the emperor having behaved with complete lack of prudence), foreseeing that if he went to visit Shapur he too would be made prisoner (another aspect of the analogy is the condition of αἰχμάλωτος reserved for the emperor by Shapur,¹⁴¹ the same which Macrianus foresees for himself¹⁴² should he visit Valerian).

¹³⁵ *F.H.G.*, IV, 191.

¹³⁶ A particularly important contribution in favour of Petros Patricius's authorship is that of C. de Boor, "Römische Kaisergeschichte im byzant. Fassung I des Anonymos post Dionem", *Byzant. Zeitschrift* I (1892), 13–33.

¹³⁷ Mazzarino, "L'*Anonymus post Dionem* e la 'topica' delle guerre romano-persiane 242/4 d.C.–283/4", in *La Persia nel Medio Evo*, Atti del conv. Acc. dei Lincei (Roma 1970), 655–678, and then in *idem*, *Il basso impero*, *op. cit.*, II, 69–103.

¹³⁸ Fr. 13.

¹³⁹ We find the reading *doryalotos* in Evagr., *H.E.*, 3, 41 and in Zonar., 12, 23.

¹⁴⁰ Zosim., 1, 36, 2.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, ἐν αἰχμαλώτῳ τάξει.

¹⁴² On the double tradition Macrinus/Macrianus see also Mazzarino, "L'*Anonymus post Dionem* . . .", *op. cit.*, 72–73 note 9.

In fact, it is not very clear why Macrianus should have given himself up as a prisoner to the king of Persia, going to visit Valerian after the emperor had been captured in battle, nor is it clear what the king's request was based on, what interest he had, and how he could expect Macrianus to accede to his request: Cledonios' request, in the name of the Persian king, was not the act of a victor on the field of battle (as is also shown by Macrianus' reply). In practice, Macrianus could perhaps only have been made prisoner in this way, by deceit, since because of his mutilated foot he devoted himself to the service of the soldiers, remaining at Samosata, and did not take part in the actions of war. In fact it is extremely likely that he was not thinking so much about looking after the soldiers and curing them, as about drawing them over to his side with a view to seizing power: a good reason,¹⁴³ probably, for Shapur to want to get rid of him, as he had got rid of Valerian, by a treacherous invitation.

As regards the expression ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ, there is no doubt that it can refer to a battle, and not to the war, as Mazzarino helpfully points out (*loc. cit.*, 78–79); but what does not necessarily follow from this is that Valerian was really a prisoner of war, that is to say *doryalotos*. He was in fact kept prisoner as *aichmalotos*, according to the version which has him captured by a trick,¹⁴⁴ and the *Anonymus post Dionem* probably alludes to the emperor as *aichmalotos* (e.g. Macrianus foresees that he will become δοῦλος καὶ αἰχμάλωτος if he goes to visit Valerian); on the other hand, in the same text, Shapur's envoy Cledonios, once he had returned, was kept prisoner among the *aichmalotoi*, which means that he was not one, but like Valerian was ἐν αἰχμαλώτου τάξει. And, if such was Cledonios, the 'functionary' of Valerian in the hands of Shapur, and sent by him to Macrianus, it is difficult to believe that, according to the same *Anonymus*, Valerian too was not in the same condition.

¹⁴³ For this meaning of ἀνακτάομαι cf. for example Herodot., 1, 50; Xenoph., *Cyrop.*, 1, 3, 9 and 2, 2, 10; it is not impossible that the ambiguity to which this verb can give rise was intentional; on this point and on its implications see J.F. Drinkwater, "The 'Catastrophe' of 260: towards a more favourable assessment of the Emperor Valerian I", *Rivista storica dell'Antichità*, 19 (1989), 123–135 (especially 131–132) and B. Bleckmann, "Zu den Quellen der Vita Gallieni duo", in *Historiae Augustae Colloquium Maceratense*, edited by G. Bonamente and G. Paci (Bari 1995), 75–103 (especially 82–84).

¹⁴⁴ Zosim., I, 36, 2.

It is however probable that the identity of Petros Patricius with the *Anon. post Dionem* is not to be altogether excluded; nevertheless one should take into consideration Mazzarino's proposal to identify the *Anonymus* with Eustathius of Epiphania: if Eustathius was the source of Evagrius, and if the *Anon. post Dionem* was the source of Zonaras (both suppositions are quite plausible and to some degree may be documented), the substantial coincidence of the two versions (in this case the capture of Valerian in the field of battle) would certainly make possible the identification of Eustathius with the *Anonymus p. D.*¹⁴⁵ But it is not so obvious that Valerian was *doryalotos* in the version of the *Anon. p. D.*; on the other hand, in Zonaras we find, as well as the version of Valerian as *doryalotos*, another version, according to which the emperor spontaneously delivered himself up to the king of Persia.¹⁴⁶ This is a version which is certainly compatible with the one involving a trick—Petros Patricius' version—quite independently of the interpretation, more or less malevolent, which could be put upon such a decision taken by an emperor who was a pagan and a persecutor: if so, Petros Patricius himself could have been the ultimate source, and since Zonaras evidently knew the *An. p. D.* well (following it sometimes *ad verbum*), the identification could be consequential, given that the *Anonymus'* version, at least, does not contradict Zonaras', and in fact the two versions substantially coincide¹⁴⁷ (who could deny, in fact, had gone ἐκόντα to Shapur without foreseeing any treachery?).¹⁴⁸

The antique historian Petros Patricius thus assumes more definite lineaments if he is in indeed also the *Anon. p. D.*: the investigation of earlier centuries, and especially of the 3rd century, would turn up many topical matters for period such as Justinian's, when the need for renewal was deeply felt but when inspiration was sought

¹⁴⁵ The problem is re-examined by B. Bleckmann, *Die Reichskrise des III. Jahrhunderts in der spätantiken und byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung* (München 1992), 97–106; see also J.-P. Callu, "D'Évagre à l'Histoire Auguste" in *Historiae Augustae Colloquium Genevense*, edited by G. Bonamente and F. Paschoud (Bari 1995), 75–103 (especially 82–84).

¹⁴⁶ Zonar., 12, 23.

¹⁴⁷ An exhaustive examination of the sources (with particular reference to the 'Res gestae' of King Shapur) is in X. Lorient, "Les premières années de la grande crise du III^e siècle: De l'avènement de Maximin le Thrace (235) à la mort de Gordien III (244)", in *ANRW*, II, 2 (1975), 757–775 [lit.].

¹⁴⁸ On the same problem see Mazzarino, "*L'Anon. post Dionem* . . .", *Il basso impero, op. cit.*, 69–103; on other aspects connected with the *Anonymus post Dionem*, see Mazzarino, *ibid.*, 26–32 and 33–68.

in tradition. The problem of the *Herrscherideal* or of the *libertas* of the barbarians, for example, are opportunely recalled; in this context, Petros Patricius who was the contemporary of Procopius, but was more fortunate than he in his public career, seems to be the expression of the imperial line, which he served both as a historian and as a politician; Procopius was in some respects his very opposite.

A Witness: Nonnosos

Rather than a historian, Nonnosos may be called a writer of memoirs, for such indeed is his work, which has come down to us in a brief extract preserved by Photius (*Bibl. cod.* 3). He came from a family of ambassadors: his grandfather Euphrasius was sent by Anastasius in 502 to Aretas of Kinda, and his father Abrames was sent several times, from 524, to Kaïsos of Kinda, nephew of Aretas, the last time after the mission on which Nonnosos himself was sent by Justinian.

Abrames managed to conclude a peace, bringing back to Byzantium the son of Kaïsos, Mauïas, as a hostage; Nonnosos was entrusted with a double task, to lead Kaïsos to the emperor, if possible, and to reach the king of the Axumites, at that time Alesbaas, and go to the Omerites as well. These and other matters are narrated by Nonnosos in his account of the journey, including the difficulties and the ambushes he encountered; despite these he successfully accomplished his mission and returned home safe and sound. He was especially attracted by the ethnographical aspects of his journey, such as the rites of the Saracens, with their assemblies in the spring and at the time of the summer solstice, when peace reigns among men and among animals.

He was astonished by the sight of elephants grazing in a vast plain around Aue, between Axum and Aduli, to the number of five thousand; and he was no less astonished by the sight of tiny men and women with black skin, covered with hair, who had human voices although they spoke an incomprehensible tongue: they were lacking in courage, were not violent and were timorous in the presence of Nonnosos' men, just as the men themselves would have been in the presence of wild beasts. These stories of adventure were not however to overshadow the exposition of facts specifically pertinent to the scope of the mission; in fact, accounts of diplomatic journeys

had become commonplace, if we think of Petros Patricius (see above), or of Julian, whom Justinian entrusted with an embassy to the Ethiopians and the Omeriti, so as to convince them to take his side against the Persians.¹⁴⁹

We could establish the date and nature of Nonnosos' embassy with greater precision if it were part of the same plan that sent Julian to Ethiopia and southern Arabia; this is not unlikely, if the mission of Nonnosos is to be dated between 528 (after his father's) and 533, and the mission of Julian in 531, and if the two missions had the same purpose, to attack Persia on both the commercial and the military plane.¹⁵⁰ That the two missions were indeed part of a single plan is suggested by a comparison between the extract of Nonnosos, where there is no mention of Julian, and the account given by Procopius (*Bella*, 1, 20, 9–13), where there is no mention of Nonnosos: the theatre and the actors seem however to be substantially the same.¹⁵¹

I feel however that a degree of prudence is required, especially as there seems to be a difference between the two texts regarding the position of Kaïsos in relation to Maadeni/Madden: he is his 'phylarchos', according to Nonnosos,¹⁵² whereas according to Procopius he was yet to be appointed 'phylarchos'.¹⁵³ In any case, Nonnosos deserves credit for his honesty in admitting implicitly the failure of his mission, which was supposed to bring Kaïsos to the emperor, since Kaïsos in fact came to Byzantium later, as the result of a mission led by Nonnosos' father.

¹⁴⁹ E.g. Theoph., *Chron.*, 1, 244 C. De Boor.

¹⁵⁰ In this connection cf. I. Kavar, "Byzantion und Kinda", *Byzant. Zeitschrift* 53 (1960) 57ff., with other sources and bibl.

¹⁵¹ For other opinions cf. for example J.B. Bury, *History*, II, 326; G. Olinder, "The Kings of Kinda and of the Family of Akil al-Murar", *Lunds Universitets Årsskrift*, N.S. (Lund 1927) 115ff.; see also J. Doresse, *L'empire du Prêtre-Jean* (Paris 1857) 174–5; E. Stein, *Histoire du B.-E.*, II, 298ff. and G. Marasco, Un viaggiatore diplomatico bizantino in Africa al tempo di Giustiniano: Nonnosos, in "L'Africa romana," Atti del convegno di studi (Djerba 10–13 dicembre 1998), Roma 2000, 175–181.

¹⁵² Except that, in this case, the verb ἐχρημάτιζε does not refer only to the title of *phylarchos* but to the effective discharging of his office on the part of Kaïsos.

¹⁵³ *Bella*, 1, 20, 9.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> , hrsg. v. H. Temporini und W. Haase, Berlin-New York, 1972–.
<i>BHAC</i>	<i>Bonner-Historia-Augusta-Colloquium</i> , Bonn, 1963–1991.
<i>FCH</i>	R.C. Blockley, <i>The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire</i> , 3 vols., Liverpool 1981–1983.
<i>FHG</i>	C. and T. Müller, <i>Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum</i> , 5 vols., Paris 1841–1847.
CCL	Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina.
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte.
<i>HE</i>	<i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> .
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi.
PG	Patrologia Graeca.
PL	Patrologia Latina.
<i>PLRE</i>	A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale, J. Morris, <i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , I–III, Cambridge 1971.
PO	Patrologia Orientalis.
<i>RE</i>	<i>Paulys Realencyklopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> .
SCh	Sources chrétiennes.

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For Procopius I have used the edition by J. Haury (Leipzig 1905–13) with *addenda et corrigenda* by G. Wirth, Procopius I–IV (Leipzig 1962–64); for Agathias the edition by R. Keydell, *Agathiae Myrinaei Historiarum libri quinque*, Berolini 1967; for Menander the Guardsman the edition by R.C. Blockley, *The History of Menander the Guardsman*, Liverpool 1985, with English translation; I have followed the edition by L. Dindorf, *Historici Graeci Minores*, Leipzig 1870 I for Petros Patricius (425–37), Theophanes of Byzantium (446–49), John of Epiphania (375–82) and Nonnosos (473–78); for the *Anonymus post Dionem* I used C. Müller, *F.H.G.* IV, 191–99.

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